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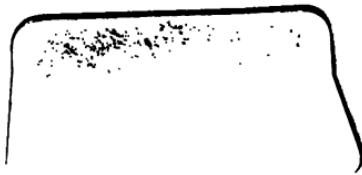
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# CHRISTIAN DUTIES

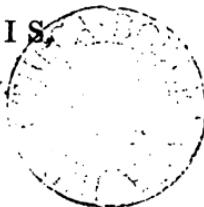
IN THE

## VARIOUS RELATIONS OF LIFE.

BY

T. LEWIS,

ISLINGTON,



"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."—  
JESUS CHRIST.

LONDON :  
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PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1839.

198.



A D D R E S S  
TO THE  
CHURCH AND CONGREGATION  
ASSEMBLING FOR THE  
WORSHIP OF GOD AND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP  
IN UNION CHAPEL, ISLINGTON.

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MY BELOVED FRIENDS,

With much pleasure, as well as from a sense of duty, I dedicate the following "Lectures" to you. For your benefit they were composed; to you they were, in substance, addressed from the Pulpit; and, at your request, they appear in their present form.

It is now nearly forty years since the great Head of the Church directed my steps to Islington, where he assigned me a Charge, in whose service he has graciously permitted me to labour, unto this day. In

the year 1801, I commenced my services with a body of Christians, Episcopalian and Congregational, who united together for the enjoyment of an evangelical ministry, then scarce in our parish. About three years after, in 1804, our church was duly organized in Highbury Grove, the place we formerly occupied. Now, indeed, few, very few, perhaps not six individuals, of the dear christian people to whom I was first called to minister the word of life, remain among us. But, on reviewing the way in which we have been led, and the great and good things our Lord has done for us, we may well exclaim, “What hath God wrought!”

For many years subsequent to the period I have just mentioned, the preaching of the gospel, truly so called, was enjoyed only among ourselves, and at two other dissenting places in our large neighbourhood. It is, however, with deep gratitude of heart I record it, our moral and spiritual improvements have been progressive. Se-

veral important societies originated with us, while we number, in connexion with our own Chapel alone, various benevolent and religious institutions. These you have hitherto been enabled to nourish and carry on with still increasing strength; and of their beneficial results you have often been assured, when “the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon you.” In your works of faith, and labours of love, you have done the father’s office to the children; you have made yourselves as brothers to the poor, and friends to all you found in need. Go on, my beloved brethren,—pursue your errands of mercy, knowing, that in clothing the naked, in imparting instruction to the ignorant, and in visiting the widows and the fatherless, you at once confer and inherit blessings. I speak not thus in flattery: no, but in thankful acknowledgment to God, the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good gift and every perfect gift;—to Him be the praise!

I may, I think, appeal to you, my brethren, that I have never shunned to "declare unto you the whole counsel of God;" that while I have laboured to give the grand and distinguishing doctrines of the gospel their due prominence, I have been careful to inculcate their practical influence; and that while I have always urged the doctrine of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ for acceptance with God, I have not neglected to testify also that "this is the will of God, even your sanctification." Upon these principles the following "Lectures" are founded. The topics which they embrace seem to me not inappropriate to the present state of things in the religious community at large. I trust they come forth under the sanction of my Divine Master; and that humble as my efforts are, he will honour them with his blessing to the spiritual benefit of some,—the only end I have in view.

It is my heart's desire and prayer, my dear brethren, that, as a church and

people, you may ever be found walking worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, and exemplifying in your lives “ whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report.” I bless God on your behalf for the peace and harmony which have been preserved among you; for the good you have instrumentally done in your neighbourhood; and especially for the many proofs and evidences which not a few of you have given of that change of heart, which is effected by the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost. And now, “ commanding you,” once more, “ to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are “ sanctified,” I remain your faithful and devoted servant and pastor,

THOMAS LEWIS.

*Islington, September, 1839.*

The Author's CHRISTIAN CHARACTERISTICS having been so favourably received by the friends of religion, has led him to hope that this little volume on CHRISTIAN DUTIES would not be unacceptable; and, should this prove to be the case, he proposes, if life and health be granted him, to follow it with a small volume on CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGES.

## CONTENTS.

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	PAGE
I. OBSERVANCE OF THE TIMES. .... ..	1
II. DUTY OF CHRISTIANS AT THE PRESENT TIME. 44	
III. DUTIES OF THE HEADS OF FAMILIES.....	90
IV. DUTIES OF CHILDREN AND SERVANTS....	147
V. DUTIES OF THE MEMBERS OF CHURCHES..	219
VI. DUTIES OF THE HEARERS OF THE WORD. 297	



## CHRISTIAN DUTIES.

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### LECTURE I.

#### ON THE OBSERVANCE OF THE TIMES.

The children of Issachar were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do;—and all their brethren were at their commandment.” 1 Chron. xii. 32.

CHRISTIANS are, and ought to be, men of observation. If, in their proper character, they are the world’s best friends, they must have their eye upon it. The passing events of the day, the prevalent maxims of society, and the conduct of public men, are not merely the allowable, but the proper subjects of their study. Though not *of* the world, they feel, and it is their duty to make others feel, that they are *in* the world;—and this they will do, if they are seeking, each in his sphere, to “serve his own generation, according to the

will of God." The disciple of Christ has his Master's example and authority for seizing on the more noted occurrences and prominent features of the times, and turning them to a moral and spiritual account. It was the practice of our Lord to draw, from the events of Providence, and the conduct of the public characters of his day, those admirable axioms and impressive instructions, which gained him the reputation of speaking as never man spake, and of teaching with an authority peculiar to himself. In his ordinary ministrations, he taught his disciples how to avail themselves of every incident, for lessons of wisdom and practical utility. Referring to the severity of the Roman governor towards the Galileans, whose blood he had mingled with their sacrifices, and to the case of those persons on whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, he takes occasion to caution them against a censorious and uncharitable spirit in judging of the unhappy sufferers; and teaches them rather to read, in both cases, a solemn call upon themselves to timely repentance. To this and other salutary purposes would he have us al-

ways turn our observance of human conduct and providential events. In the very lively description which he gives his disciples of the calamitous times that were about to befall Jerusalem, how minutely and impressively does he charge them to give such heed to the approaching signs of the times, as should prepare them to resist delusion, and secure their peace and safety !

“ When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is at hand. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

This spirit of cautiously and profitably observing the signs of the times, has been, more or less, cultivated in all ages of the world, by many of God’s people. When the hand of the Lord has been lifted up, they have seen and acknowledged it. They have marked the expression of his will in his doings before them, and have taken their course accordingly; and not a few of them have been remarkably distinguished by the influence which

their exertions have had on the mind of a nation, and the measures adopted by its rulers. We stay not to particularize examples, but we may observe that we have been indebted to the instrumentality of men chiefly of this description for those brilliant epochs in the course of time, when the progress of our species in every great improvement has been most efficiently promoted. We shall find this in the pages of both sacred and profane history. They were men, who, having "understanding of the times," saw and felt what ought to be done; and by their speaking, their writing, and their doing, served the interests at once of their own, and subsequent, generations. We have reason to bless God that the history especially of our own country, exhibits a goodly number of such desirable characters, to whose services many blessings now enjoyed, in our social state, are mainly to be traced. Nor is the present day destitute of talented and pious individuals, who possess such a sagacious perception of the most obvious features of the times, as to see and declare what we, as Christians, ought to do, in our re-

spective spheres. It is, however, to be feared that there are very many professing Christians,—aye, and many truly regenerated, and, in most respects, exemplary believers in Christ, who, from whatever cause, do not sufficiently “consider the works of God, nor regard the operations of his hand.” They suffer the signs of the times, and the events of the world in which they sojourn, to pass from before them unstudied, and, therefore, unimproved. It was not so with the children of Issachar; they are described by the sacred historian with commendation, as “men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.” Of all the tribes and companies, who flocked to the standard of David, after the death of Saul, the children of Issachar alone are reported under this honourable distinction, which gave them a special ascendancy over others, for it is added, “and all their brethren were at their commandment.”

The events with which the words of our text are connected, are thus briefly explained by that excellent commentator, Mr. Scott. “The Lord had promised that David should

reign over all Israel ; but so long as Ishbos-  
heth, the son of Saul, was living, the men of  
Issachar wisely judged that the time was not  
arrived for the fulfilment of that promise, and  
that a premature attempt would only occasion  
the needless effusion of human blood. But  
when Ishbosheth was removed, they under-  
stood that the time was come, and that it was  
their duty to render David all the assistance  
in their power. Had they moved sooner, or  
had they waited longer, they would have acted  
unreasonably ; but the timing of the service  
was as important as the service itself." We  
cannot but admire, and we ought to imitate this  
combination of piety and wisdom. Theirs was a  
conduct guarded, on the one hand, from the  
rashness of those who, rushing upon the ob-  
stacles which a little time and patience would  
easily put aside, risk every thing sacred and  
profane, for the accomplishment of their pur-  
pose; while, on the other, it is sufficiently  
remote from the supineness of those, who,  
though deeply convinced of their duty, neg-  
lect, or delay, some of the most important ser-  
vices they owe to God and man.

From the occurrence to which our text refers, namely, the assemblage of the tribes of Israel to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to David, we take the sense of the words to be this :— The children of Issachar, believing that they had arrived at a crisis favourable for settling the affairs of the kingdom, according to the known purpose of God, felt it their duty to come forward, and maintain the right of that man to the throne, whom God had appointed to be king over Israel. Now, “whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning :”—may the Holy Spirit teach us, from the example of these men, so to study the aspect of our own times, as rightly to perceive, and faithfully to discharge the duties which they appear to suggest.

In the further prosecution of our theme we will consider,

I. THE ASPECT OF THE TIMES.

II. THE NATURE AND EXCELLENCE OF THE UNDERSTANDING ATTRIBUTED TO THE CHILDREN OF ISSACHAR.

1. We are to consider THE ASPECT OF THE TIMES. I must premise, that, on this topic,

I mean not to indulge in any thing purely political. Lectures on such topics enter not into my province ; neither do they comport with my inclination. My aim is simply directed to moral and spiritual improvement ; and with this view, I contemplate the aspect of the times, only as it bears upon us in our christian character. I shall touch, therefore, on a few prominent points, intelligible to the plainest understandings, and deserving the consideration of every serious mind. It is not to be denied that the times in which we live are distinguished by many and great improvements. Illustrious as some past ages may be reckoned for men of brilliant genius and eminent attainments, no age, perhaps, has ever been so rich in commercial, scientific, and literary cultivation as the present. The research and ingenuity of men are now put to the utmost stretch for the advancement of every branch of human knowledge. Of our own nation in particular, we have much, at the present day, to record with thankfulness. We are in the midst of numerous institutions sacred to science, to the arts, and to charity ;

and these are supported with a liberality honourable to the age. We have societies, of more or less extended operation, established and maintained by voluntary effort, and diffusing abroad the benefits of christian knowledge. Many individuals, too, of them who are "the salt of the earth,"—men eminent for talent and piety, dwell among us. We number in our land many *working* people, who "run to and fro," and knowledge is increased; — many *giving* people, who come to the help of the Lord, and "with a willing heart," make offering of their gold, their silver and their brass; — many *praying* people, who "pray and make supplication to their God;" and he hears them from the heavens, even from his dwelling place, and maintains their cause. We ought also, as a nation, gratefully to acknowledge our civil and religious privileges. Our constitution, based as it is on the principles of equal law and liberty, is the admiration of the civilized world; and in the matters of our holy religion, we are unfettered. We build our sanctuaries without fear of hindrance, we assemble in them, and worship the

Lord our God, according to his own law and testimony ; we bow around our domestic altars, and no hand is permitted to annoy us. With these marks of his favour it has pleased God to distinguish Britain ; and as we contemplate them we may exclaim, “ What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for ? He hath not dealt so with any nation ; and as for his judgments, they have not known them.—Praise ye the Lord.”

But have we, as a people, rendered again to the Lord according to his benefits ? Have our fruits abounded in proportion to the culture bestowed ; and has our gratitude responded to the privileges we enjoy ?—far otherwise ; we are a sinful and perverse nation. “ Our transgressions are multiplied before God, and our sins testify against us ;” and if he were to “ lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet,” we should fall under his just indignation.—“ O Lord, the great and dreadful God ! we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by depart-

ing from thy precepts and from thy judgments."

Yes, brethren, great as our national mercies and privileges are, we cannot but lament the prevalence of vice in society at large. If we look with any attention at the moral character of the times, what do we observe, but an awful contempt of the Divine authority,—a sad abuse of Divine mercies,—a defiance of Divine judgments,—a neglect of sacred privileges,—and, in fine, the abounding of every species of iniquity? But, to this we may add, that we see also, in the present times, much of the ancient prophecies hastening to their fulfilment.

1st. We observe in the character of the times *an awful contempt of the Divine authority*. We are dependant creatures, under the control, and at the mercy of him who made us,—and yet we forget him! We are helpless, decaying, and dying creatures,—and yet how the thousands among us scorn the warnings and the remedies of God! We are depraved and guilty creatures,—and yet, how multitudes spurn at rebuke, despise repent-

ance, and rush, unprepared, into a fearful eternity! Now, what is the complaint that a holy, just, yet insulted God makes of such a people?—even that which he made, long since, of Ephraim: “I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.” He who has a right, as our sovereign, to lay down the law, has himself revealed it in clear, intelligible terms; but we refuse it, as a strange thing, with which we will have nothing to do. He, to whom we are best known, has so pitied our case, as to give us the best, the only directory to life and happiness; but we have loved our own darkness, rather than his light; and have treated the great things of his law as unworthy of our regard. This is a hard and severe charge, say you, to bring against the people of our day. But will its truth be disputed? What, then, means the awful infidelity which is so daringly avowed in every grade of society? What means that disgusting habit of taking the name of God in vain, so prevalent in a large portion of our population, and wounding our ears in every street? What

the open desecration of the christian sabbath ? and what the frequent sneer and sarcasm cast on every form and expression of piety, in numerous circles around us ? Do not these and other glaring sins which might be mentioned, justify the charge we have made ?

2ndly. We observe also *a sad abuse of Divine mercies.* The mercies which we, as a nation, as well as individuals, have received at the hand of God, are countless in number, and inestimable in value. If we attempt to enumerate them, we know not how to begin, or where to end. Consider the advantages of our insular position, by which, under Providence, we are secured from foreign invasion, and the consequent horrors of war. Consider the temperature of our climate, affording us safe and salutary alternations of heat and cold; and bringing round to us, with but little interruption in the regularity of their succession, our seed-time and harvest, our summer and winter, in all their varied benefits and beauties. Consider our commercial advantages, by which our rivers are studded with ships ; our country is enriched;

the produce of every distant land is spread upon our table ; our “merchants are princes, and our traffickers the honourable of the earth.” Think of the general fertility of our soil ; of the abundance of our flocks and herds, and the facilities most commonly existing, for procuring the necessaries and the comforts of life. But more especially, think of our land, as a land of Bibles,—a possession of itself the most ennobling, the most enriching. Its doctrines are explained, its precepts enforced, by the ministers of sacred truth, through the length and breadth of the land. “The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage.” But how have all these mercies operated upon our mind and conduct as a people ? Truth, alas ! compels us to acknowledge, we have greatly abused them. How uncommon—nay, how unfashionable is it, in general conversation, to attribute any of our enjoyments to the kindness of God’s providence, or the blessings of his grace. So far from giving God the glory, it seems to be the conventional practice among us to ascribe every advantage we possess

to our own energy, our own industry, our own wisdom. We seem to deny that it is he who giveth us power to get wealth; and we “say in our hearts, Our power, and the might of our hands hath gotten us this wealth;” and thus, like the haughty Chaldeans, “we sacrifice to our own net, and burn incense to our own drag.” But what is more, in how many instances are the very bounties of God’s hand made to minister to intemperance, to pride, to dissipation of every description. And even the talents, with which we may be personally endowed, a superior intellect, a bright genius, extensive learning,—how often are they arrayed against all that is sacred or decent in society, and prostituted to the service of the basest passions of our fallen nature! Truly, brethren, there is great abuse of Divine mercies in the character of the times.

3rdly. We observe in the present times *a defiance of Divine judgments.* The abuse of our mercies endangers our possession of them; it provokes the Almighty to withdraw them; it does more, it turns the God of mercy

into a God of judgment; “for the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” When his mercies have been long continued, and long abused, he changes his treatment; and often is his voice heard in the visitations of his just displeasure, saying: “Therefore will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax. And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentations; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.” God has various ways of punishing the iniquity of a people. He can send for the sword, for pestilence, for famine; at his bidding they fall on the objects of his anger, and they are fearfully consumed. But when judgments have fallen upon our land, how have we met them? have we humbled ourselves under the mighty hand of God? Have we, like the people of Nineveh, “covered ourselves with sackcloth, from the greatest of us to the least, and cried

mightily unto God ; and turned every one from his evil way, and from the violence that was in our hands ?" No ; though we have felt, we have not " heard the rod, nor Him who hath appointed it." Our pride, our luxury, our dissipation, have not been abandoned ; they have not even been abated. After any national or public calamity, which, indeed, has always been infinitely lighter than our sins deserved, might not any pious man among us go to his God, with the complaint of the prophet, " Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved ; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction ; they have made their faces harder than a rock ; they have refused to return." But other features in the aspect of the times remain to be noticed. We observe also,—

4thly. *The neglect of sacred privileges* ; and, in fine, *the abounding of every species of iniquity*. Many christian sanctuaries, it is true, have lately risen up in the midst of us ; and it is to be hoped that many individuals, formerly living as ignorant of God and the way of salvation as the veryest heathens, have

been induced to attend them. Not a few, we trust, have been thus gained from the world that lieth in wickedness, and "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." But these happy cases, how seldom do they occur ! The mass of our population, after all, are guilty of extreme negligence of religion, and rather shun than seek the means of religious instruction. The Sabbath is spent by multitudes, either in their secular occupations or profane amusements. The house of God is passed by with indifference, as a place only for enthusiasts and devotees. The preaching of the word is despised, as the telling of fables to weak minds; and devotional exercises are held to be destructive of the enjoyments of life.

Such being the general neglect of religion and religious things, we cannot wonder if we find every species of iniquity abounding among us. Vice, in its worst deformity, lifts up its head and stalks on every hand of us unrestrained. A human being, intoxicated, is a fit subject to make merry with. Revelling and wantonness are exhibitions of manliness and

spirit. Gambling and brutal sports are the favourite practice and amusement of men of rank and fashion; and we perceive fraud, falsehood, slander, and the idolatry of covetousness, indulged to a fearful extent in every section of society. For testimony to the truth of these statements, we need only look at the population of our metropolis. The Third Report of the City Mission, which we have reason to know is strictly true, contains the following paragraph :—“ After all the labours of this Mission, and of kindred institutions, how fearful and appalling is the state of London ! The population rapidly increasing, poverty extending her withering influence among the humbler and less efficient portion of the labouring classes ; increased desecration of the Sabbath by steam-boats and rail-roads ; deism and infidelity not only retaining their strong holds among the poor, but in districts unblessed with christian instruction necessarily increasing ; intemperance hurrying thousands and tens of thousands to our public hospitals, or to linger in the garret or cellar of some wretched hovel, and then to the grave and eternity, unprepared

to meet God; gambling extensively patronised and practised by the rich and by the poor; theatrical establishments multiplying, and, for some months past, better attended than formerly; obscene books and prints widely circulated in a cheap form, and got up to gratify the most depraved tastes and passions; infidel, socinian, and popish tracts freely distributed; and every temptation furnished to allure and ruin the youth of both sexes, that our depraved nature, wicked men, and even demons, can possibly desire."

Such, brethren, is the diseased state of the metropolis; and the infection, we may be sure, spreads through the land, into all our great cities and towns, leaving not even our villages exempt from its hateful invasion. Alas! we are "a people laden with iniquity; a seed of evil doers; children that are corrupters; the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint."

In addition, however, to these features of the times, we have observed that we see in them,—

*5thly. Much of ancient prophecy hastening to its fulfilment. The Maker of the*

world has never left himself without a witness, in his works, to his existence, to his power, to his wisdom, and other of his attributes, before the children of men. The heavens, the earth, and all that is therein, declare his glory, and show his handy-work. But fallen man required other testimony. Benighted in his understanding, and alienated in his heart, he could not find his way back to God and happiness without a guide from the source of light itself. God, therefore, gave him his word. In this word he has revealed to us as much concerning his nature and his dispensations as is needful for the well-being of our present life, and a preparation for that which is to come. Its great object is to reveal the Saviour of a lost world, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This glorious personage, long before his coming to our earth, instructed his prophets to foretell, in the pages of his word, the events that should both precede and follow after that grand era in the history of our world. Theirs is that "sure word of prophecy whereunto we do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place."

Many of their predictions are, of course, already fulfilled; many yet await their accomplishment. But our own times abound with demonstrations of prophetic truth, so full, so clear, "that he that runneth may read." Those very features in the aspect of the present times, which we have just specified, are, in all their lamentable forms, the evident fulfilment of sacred prophecy; for it assures us, that "in the last days there shall come scoffers walking after their own lusts, speaking great swelling words of vanity; foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." Thus are gainsayers and unbelievers themselves so many living testimonies to the truth of our holy religion. Their appearance, in such days as ours, was predicted, that they who are taught of the Spirit might have their faith confirmed.

The present times, however, are marked also with many cheering features. Compared with the times of pagan idolatry, with the dark ages of popish superstition, and the days of fiery persecution, ours is a season of light, and li-

berty, and delightful promise. If, with the aid of history, we look up the stream of time, and contemplate the divinely-inspired prophecies, from the fall of man to the coming of the Saviour, and continue to trace them down to our own times, we cannot but be struck with the identity of spirit and object in them all. Each prediction we find to be a link in a long chain of prophecies which have been fulfilling, are fulfilling, and will yet be fulfilled, until the grand consummation of human redemption. The stream of time that is now passing by us, is bringing on the fulfilment of those prophecies that had respect to our own day. The church of Christ is now being awakened; the spiritual Zion is now putting on her strength, even her beautiful garments; and she is now sending forth the heralds of her Lord's everlasting truth, and offering his salvation to the ends of the earth. The prophet had said, "The isles shall wait for his law," and they are now receiving it. He had said, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;" and the word of the Lord is now

distributed through the earth, in all the languages and dialects of the human tongue. He had said, "In that day a man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made, each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;" and now, whole nations and tribes are casting the idols of their own making away from them as an abomination. The prophet, speaking the language of the Messiah, had said, "The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;" and is not the glad song of the newly-ransomed and liberated slave being wafted across the ocean to our delighted ears at this very day? Brethren, look at the movements of the present times—whether those of the nations at large, or of the church in particular, and you will say, "The Lord hath not utterly taken his loving-kindness from us, nor suffered his faithfulness to fail; his covenant hath he not broken, nor altered the thing that is gone out of his lips." We come now—

II. To consider THE NATURE AND EXCELLENCE OF THE UNDERSTANDING ATTRIBUTED TO THE CHILDREN OF ISSACHAR. It was understanding of *the times*, and it denotes their serious attention to the signs of the times, and their devout recognition of the Divine hand in the affairs of men. Brethren, to live altogether indifferent to the events that are passing before us,—to be utterly heedless of what Providence is doing in our own day, were to live in brute unconsciousness of our individual concern with the world and society. We should be holding our rational faculties, as it were, in abeyance, and maintaining a dullness under the lessons of mature experience, which would leave us still in the ignorance of little children. True, all minds are not of equal capacity ; nor is it given to many to penetrate deeply into the designs of Providence and the characters of men, so as to elicit conclusions for the guidance of a nation ; but it is the duty of all of us to give attentive and prayerful heed to the more obvious signs of the times, for purposes practically beneficial to ourselves and others. “The works of the Lord are

great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." Negligent of this, we deny ourselves the acquisition of a useful branch of knowledge, and fail to discharge an important social duty. But if we are seriously and habitually observant of the times, we can more accurately read the book of Providence, and better serve our generation. "A wise man's heart," says the preacher, "discerneth both time and judgment." The children of Issachar appear to have had men among them of this description. Of a contemplative, yet decided character, and giving themselves to the study of men and things, and to the observance of providential movements, they became eminent for political sagacity ; and, it is probable, that from their number the "wise counsellors" of state were selected. And here we may observe, that to qualify themselves for such usefulness, they needed not to travel far and wide, to explore the literature and science, and learn the customs, manners, and government of other nations. The history of their own people, the most remarkable in the world, afforded them sufficient scope for deep and interesting

meditation. They found it crowded with events of the most astonishing nature, unparalleled in the history of any other nation, and claiming their admiring, their grateful admiration. Truly, they might well say with their own David, "What nation in the earth, O Lord God, is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things, and terrible for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?"

In pursuing and acting upon this study, the children of Issachar displayed a pious and patriotic example. They taught the lesson of being wakefully attentive to our public and social condition, and of consecrating our talents to the glory of God and the common interest. They taught the fear of God, by devoutly studying the manifestations of his will; and the love of the community, by turning to its benefit the fruits of their study. Piety and patriotism should ever be united. I mean not that spurious patriotism that aims at the aggrandisement of our own country

upon the ruin or subjugation of every other. This ungenerous feeling is not patriotism, but selfishness upon a larger scale. Whatever is opposed to justice and the love of our kind, is incompatible with christian principle and a truly patriotic spirit. But the genuine friend of his country is also the fearer of God. While he is fully alive to the welfare of the land which gave him birth, he will be guided only by the word of God in the counsels which he gives, or the services he performs for her interest. Divinely instructed, he traces events to their proper causes. If his country is suffering under any calamity,—if the times assume a threatening aspect, and the general mind is agitated with fear, he not only pleads with his God, but diligently seeks for ground of hope and consolation, where-with he may promote the public tranquillity. If prosperity be granted, if his country enjoy the blessings of peace and contentment,—of successful commerce,—of plentiful harvests, the christian patriot, tracing them all to the bounty of God, calls to devout gratitude; and excites his fellow-countrymen to “praise the

Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men." Assuredly, brethren, to make our understanding of the times thus available, is to be highly honoured. To this honour let us aspire. If we look abroad, let it be with a discerning eye, to distinguish between the prejudices of men and the character of the times. When we look inward, let it be with an impartial eye, to examine ourselves as to the share we have, each one, in forming the features of the times. And more especially, if evil abounds, let none of us sink his individuality in the multitude; nor vainly imagine that he can compound for personal repentance, by loudly lamenting the general depravity. The community is made up of individuals. We are all parts of the great whole; and if each one of us, from the greatest to the least, "turn from his iniquity, deny all his ungodliness and worldly lusts; and live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world," then the Lord, who is "a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, will repent him of the evil that he had threatened, and will do it not." Then

will he find, “the hedge made up, and the gap filled before him, for the land, that he should not destroy it.” The righteous are they that hedge round the land, and fill up the gap, through which his judgments would otherwise rush in. “Scornful men bring a city into a snare; but wise men turn away wrath.”

We have also to observe on this part of our subject, a peculiar influence ascribed to the knowledge of the times, cultivated by these children of Issachar. It made them competent to command their brethren, and to guide the state. “They knew what Israel ought to do, and all their brethren were at their commandment.” Knowledge is power. When possessed in a comparatively large degree, it necessarily gives its possessor an advantage over others. It will, in most cases, obtain a moral preponderance, and its judicious exhibition seldom fails to receive the homage of obedience to its dictates. In the christian character it is an important and desirable attribute. To be influential, then, we must be wise. We must pursue the science of human life and

human interests; our object being, not the acquisition of a knowledge simply ornamental, but that which is substantially useful. Nor is it needful that we should aim at the reputation of eminent statesmen, or profound philosophers. We are not required, nor are we all able, to enrich the world with the fruits of intellectual research, or to charm it with the splendours of genius; but every Christian is bound to occupy and improve the talents committed to him, so that the usury may go to promote the social good and the glory of God. It ought never to be forgotten that a talent not used is a talent abused: the Master who gave it will reckon it so when he comes to demand an account. To withhold from society whatever good a single talent might have rendered, will incur the charge of slothful ingratitude and injustice. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Let the Christian, then, to qualify himself for general benefit, cultivate a public spirit—a universal charity. Nothing that is human should be foreign to him: he lives not for himself alone, but for his fellow men. "He looks ont

on his own things only, but also on the things of others." Yes, my brethren, our holy religion is essentially benevolent, and therefore social. A state of entire seclusion cannot belong to the Christian; many of his duties relate to society, and he must be found in it. It is, however, no less true, that retirement from the busy scenes of life is often a decided duty: it is peculiarly the season of collected and serious thought. The hour of retirement is the hour for prayer; the hour best adapted for communion with God and our own souls. It is also the hour most favourable to undisturbed meditation on all truths, whether of public or private interest. If we would obtain knowledge for general utility, we must not only gain materials from intercourse with society, but we must also bring them before God in retirement, and thence carry them out thoroughly concocted for the uses intended. Withdrawn from the world, and divesting ourselves, as much as possible, of its passions and prejudices, let us humbly and devoutly approach the pure source of light and truth; let us "ask wisdom of God, who giveth to all

men liberally, and upbraideth not." Then shall discretion preserve us, understanding shall keep us." Then shall the wisdom that cometh from above commend itself to the acceptance of those with whom we have intercourse; and our communications will gain an influence at once easy and beneficial. It was when possessed of knowledge from this source that Job could say, "Unto me men gave ear, and waited and kept silence at my counsel. After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them. And they waited for me as for the rain, and they opened their mouth wide, as for the latter rain."

And now, brethren, there are certain christian exercises which this entire subject seems to suggest to our special attention; these are deep humility, constant vigilance, and fervent prayer.

1st. *Deep humility* before God becomes us. We have had occasion, in the glance we took of the aspect of the times, to lament the awful prevalence of sin in our day; but we do not lament this fact with a right feeling of mind, unless we humbly acknowledge our own

individual share in the national depravity. To bewail the variety and extent of crime chargeable on the nation, while our own personal guilt is neither felt nor owned, is, in the sight of a heart-searching God, false and hypocritical dealing. O let every one see to this. Here, it is not a fellow-creature we have to do with, but an omniscient, a holy God, who searches us, and knows us; who understands our thoughts afar off, and from whose ear we cannot detain a word that escapes from our lips; "who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity." To Him, then, let each of us make confession of our sins. Who among us is conscious of having indulged worldliness of mind, intemperance, carnality, covetousness, abuse of the Lord's day and his holy word? Who among us feels that he is chargeable with the anti-social vices of "bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, and malice?" Let him, whosoever he may be, consider that he is accumulating the causes of God's indignation against the land. "Shall I not visit for these things," saith the

Lord, “and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this.” But let him also consider the awful position of his own soul before God. *That* God is now his witness,—he will hereafter be his judge. O, I would entreat him to humble himself at the cross of the Redeemer: there is no other way to the heart of God, as the dwelling-place of mercy. It is in Christ that God is found “reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Sinner! go, afflict your soul before God in humble confession; let your convictions have their full force upon you; check them not, they are needful to make the Saviour precious to you. Look to his atonement; trust in his grace; then listen to his own assurance, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” Our subject suggests also:

2dly. *Constant vigilance.* It is not enough that we are convinced; not enough that we make humble confession; we are still frail creatures, ready to err. In ourselves we have

no resources ; we can withstand no temptation ; we can encounter no difficulty ; we can expect no christian grace by any wisdom or strength of our own. We must, therefore, be jealous of ourselves, and jealousy begets vigilance. Knowing then the weakness of the citadel, we cannot be too vigilant against the approach of the enemy ; but if the citadel is not only weak ; if it also harbours a traitorous party within, that holds dangerous correspondence with the enemy without, how needful is watchfulness. Our spirit, our temper, our constitutional propensity, our avowed principles themselves, require to be watched with jealous circumspection. That this may be successfully done, we must know ourselves ; we must know the plague of our own hearts, and the sins that most easily beset us ; we must guard against the first emotions, lest they break out into ebullitions of anger, impatience, pride, and unchristian-like resentment, which are all opposed to our divine Master's rule, who says, " Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." The sinful thought, the unhallowed

emotion, should be instantly suppressed. The cockatrice should be crushed in the egg, and no serpent will grow up to sting : the first shoot of evil should be cut off—the early buds should be nipped—lest the corrupt tree bring forth fruit unto death. Let us also look well to the sentiments and principles we have embraced; let us test them by the standard of heavenly truth; and when we have ascertained a perfect agreement therewith, let us watch against the sophistry of error, that we may not be “children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” Brethren, I pray you to be watchful here, for new-fangled notions are rife among us. We live in an age when the love of speculation and originality is drawing many into snares, involving the ruin of their best principles, and the hope of the gospel. “Brethren, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world: and be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, for it is a good

thing that the heart be established with grace.”  
But,—

3rdly. Our vigilance to be available requires a companion; it must be united with *prayer*. Like Nehemiah of old, when we set a *watch* we must also make our *prayer* unto God: our own vigilance will fail to secure us without this union. It will neither be at all times sufficiently awake to approaching danger, nor sufficiently true to give us warning, unless we bring the Holy Spirit to our aid by means of fervent, importunate prayer. The necessity of prayer it would be atheistical to deny;—with the Christian it is, at all times, an indispensable exercise. From God we derive our all; on God is all our dependance; to God we must all account; before him, therefore, let us spread our every case. Our native land demands our prayers; the Church of Christ demands them; our families and ourselves demand them; God himself invites us to the duty, and awaits our approach. If our country be in any trouble, it is plainly the duty of the righteous within her borders to pray in her behalf; to beseech God “to give

repentance to the people, with the remission of sins, to heal the disorders of the land, and to cause his name to be magnified in it." It is at once the duty and privilege of God's people to unite in this pious and patriotic work. Especially let them supplicate their God in favour of those who guide the affairs of state, that they may rule with wisdom and the fear of the Lord. Let them make all ranks of the people, and all their lawful interests, the burden of their prayers; and who knows but that God will be intreated of them for the land; and they become "the repairers of the breach, the restorers of paths to walk in?" The Church of Christ in all lands, of all languages, of all denominations, has continual claims upon our prayers. This is emphatically our own cause; with the interests of the church we identify our own, for of that body we are members. The extension, the stability, the beauty, the glory of the church in the world, are objects dear to the heart of every Christian. It is required of us that we reckon her welfare of paramount importance; that we prefer her above our chief joy, and that we

give the hearer of prayer “ no rest till he establish and till he make our Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” Moreover, we who minister about holy things need the prayers of our people. We ask the benefit of your petitions to a throne of grace. We say with the apostle, “ Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified; and that utterance may be given us, that we may open our mouths boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.” The interests of our respective families, as well as our own individual cases, demand that we should pray, and that without ceasing. The domestic altar is an integral part in the arrangements of every christian family ; you dare not, you cannot, if you belong to Christ, neglect the spiritual interests of your own house. This, indeed, were to deny the faith, and become worse than infidels ; but in praying for your families, let the aspect of the times bear upon your petitions. Whatever be the prevalent sins of the day, let it be your cry to God, that you and yours may be kept by his grace from any share in the amount, and from the con-

tamination of their influence. As it regards transgressors and their ways, let your language and that of your household be,—“O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united. I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked. I will wash mine hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.”

Finally, to the frequent and fervent exercise of prayer, we are not only called by the consideration of need in every case, but we are also encouraged to it by the example of holy men recorded in the scriptures, and of Christ himself, and by the kindest and tenderest invitations of God’s own word. As to the encouragement arising from example, I need only observe, that there is not a good man of whom we have any biographical notice in scripture, who is not shown to be a man of prayer. We cannot read of the patriarchs, or of Moses, or of the prophets, or of the apostles, without being impressed with their eminent devotional character. And the devotions, too,

of these men of God, so far as they are known to us, breathe much of the public and patriotic spirit; they evidently bear close upon the circumstances of the times in which they lived, and the interests of the country to which they respectively belonged. But the highest and most attractive example is that of our Lord himself: how frequent, how fervent, and O how benevolent were his prayers to the Father, in behalf of his disciples, and of all that should believe through their word! Do we want any farther encouragement? Our gracious God is represented as seated on a throne of grace, whence he commands, invites, and even intreats us to draw near,—to make our requests known to him,—to ask, and to ask with importunity. He says not to any of us, “Seek ye my face in vain:” on the contrary, he promises to hear and to bestow. In prayer he meets us as a father meets his children. The Saviour teaches us that, “if we who are parents, and sinful parents, give good gifts to our children when they ask us, much more will our Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit

to them that ask him. No language can be more powerfully inviting. “Let us then come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

## LECTURE II.

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### THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS AT THE PRESENT TIME.

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"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."—  
1 Cor. xv. 58.

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BRETHREN, to decree and control the events of time is the prerogative of the Almighty. It is his to "change the times and the seasons, to remove kings and to set up kings; and to do according to his will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." It is our duty and privilege to study, with reverential attention, the operations of his hand, that we may acquaint ourselves with his will and pleasure, as indicated by them. It is for God to ordain, to appoint our lot, to give the law—it is for us in humble acquiescence, in

grateful acknowledgment, to bow to his sovereignty. We are satisfied that he wills nothing incompatible with the best reason, whether that reason be discoverable by us, or not ; and that, in all his dealings with us, his object is to promote his own glory and our best interests. A settled conviction that such object is ever present in the Divine mind, is the principle on which every inquiry we institute into the special reasons for this or that dispensation of his hand, ought to be conducted. Numerous, however, are the cases, where special reasons do not appear. "His way is" often "in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known. He doeth great things, past finding out, and giveth not account of any of his matters." What, then, is our part ? What, but to adore ; and whatever our intellectual pretensions among men may be, to bow to infinite wisdom, and say, each one for himself, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do ?" Of a truth, without this humble and obedient spirit, no observance of God's providence, no inquiry into the purposes of his operations, can be expected to

result, either in his glory, or in our own real good. But the duties devolving upon us as Christians are to be studied and learnt, not only from the ways of God, but also from the ways of men ;—in other words, from the character of the age in which we live. We ought to be ever awake to catch instruction, and that from every source. We are the professed servants of God, and “as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so should our eyes wait upon the Lord our God.” We are witnesses for him in our generation; and have to testify to his sovereignty by our obedience; to his wisdom and power, by our praise; to his holiness and majesty, by our adoration; and to his goodness and grace, by our supplications. As it regards our fellow-men, we are, as Christians, deeply interested in whatever concerns them, and we have important duties to discharge, arising out of the ever-varying condition of the community to which we belong. Public calamities call us to humble prostration and prayer, and every exercise of christian sympa-

thy; while public blessings demand our grateful acknowledgments to the Giver of all good, with all those gratulatory expressions which flow from the Spirit of him who bids us "rejoice with them that do rejoice." It is obvious, therefore, that, to the thoughtful and devout mind, there is no season without its duty.

The subject now before us is, "The Duty of Christians at the Present Time." In the review we took of the present times, in a former Lecture, we briefly depicted some of the more prominent features. These, we found, were of various, and even opposite characters. Some it was pleasing and gratifying, others, grievous and deplorable, to contemplate. The duties which both kinds present to us are of a corresponding variety; and it may be a profitable exercise to specify some of these, and consider their claims to our attention.

1. In the discourse alluded to I had remarked that the liberality of our civil constitution leaves us unfettered in the matters of our holy religion; and not only so, but also secures our religious liberties by legal pro-

visions. Hence the duty of *grateful obedience to the government* under which we live. Brethren, if the advantages of our civil condition are rightly appreciated, we shall be careful to exemplify every quality of good citizenship. We shall not only in our own deportment be exemplary in respecting the persons and officers of civil magistrates, but, as far as in us lies, we shall support their claims to the respect of the community at large. We shall take no part in political factions, nor connect ourselves with the extremes of any party in the state. We shall “follow after the things that make for peace;” and act upon the counsel of the wise man, “My son, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them who are given to change.” Without compromising any principle of right and wrong, without a pusillanimous and dastardly surrender of our due rights and privileges, it becomes us to “submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or to the governors under him; to render to all their dues; tribute to whom tri-

bute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour." And by the highest authority of all the rule prescribed to us is, "to render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." These are scriptural injunctions. In adhering to them we shall not make shipwreck of a good conscience ; for they enjoin nothing that either prohibits our censuring the measures of public men, when they are decidedly wrong, or making a firm stand for our rights and liberties, when they happen to be invaded. But a temperate and respectful exercise of our privilege, in either case, is our bounden duty ; and when exercised in this way, it will not unfrequently prove beneficial, no less to the rulers than to the people.

2. We admitted that pious and talented individuals are not wanting in our land, who have understanding of the times, to know what Christians ought to do. For this let us "thank God, and take courage." These characters are at once the ornament and protection of their country. They do honour to

their native place by the strength and grandeur of their talents, and the loveliness of their moral virtues. They prove also a defence to the land in which they live; for the Lord has respect to the godly. For ten righteous men he would have spared Sodom; and respecting Jerusalem, he said, "I will defend this city for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake." By the mouth also of Jeremiah, he proclaims, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it." Now what duty is suggested to us by this delightful feature of our times? Is it not that *we should pray earnestly, and without ceasing, that men of such character may long be preserved among us; that their lives may be precious in the sight of the Lord; and that their number may be more and more increased?* And if in this last object of our prayers we be sincere, we shall study the excellencies of their character for our own imitation, and so multiply their

number. It also becomes us to listen to the counsels and expressed opinions of such men with serious attention, and allow them that weight upon our judgment and conduct to which their enlightened piety has an undoubted claim. Of all qualifications for serving a community, wisdom and piety combined are, and ought to be, the most commanding. It is indeed a rare excellence. That land is the happiest where it most abounds. "Happy are thy men," exclaimed the queen of Sheba, when she witnessed the wisdom of Solomon and his going up unto the house of the Lord, "happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice." Believing, therefore, as I do, that no country in the world contains, within the same limits, so many truly pious and enlightened souls as our own highly favoured country, I cannot but impress it upon all, as a pleasing duty, to

praise and bless the Lord our God, from time to time, for this distinguished favour, this mark of loving-kindness to our land. May we not, on such a topic, take up the song of David, "The Lord hath chosen Britain; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy."

3. We had also remarked that institutions abound among us for the diffusion of christian knowledge, and the support of every benevolent object. Our country, it is well known, is adorned with many excellent institutions for the promotion of science and literature. These are in vigorous operation; and have undoubtedly contributed to raise us high in the estimation of the civilized world. But Britain is infinitely more blessed of heaven, and ennobled in the sight of all God's people, by being made the birth-place and nurse of institutions which minister to the spiritual interests of the whole family of man. Our Mis-

sionary, our Bible, our Tract Societies, with an almost countless multitude of Auxiliaries and Associations, every where around us, are the glory of our land. These illustrious combinations for the evangelization of the world, with the zealous efforts making at home, by our Sunday Schools, for the religious instruction of the rising generation, and by our City and Town Missions, for making aggressions on the strong-holds of satan, are bright and gladdening tokens of God's favour towards us, as a people. The duties to which these delightful considerations invite and urge us are those, first, of *grateful praise for such gracious distinctions*; and then, *combined and individual prayer, for their continuance and prosperity*, and in proof of our cordial sympathy with them all, *to encourage and feed them, as far as our means and opportunity will admit, with our personal and pecuniary aid*. Yes, we ought never to forget, that while we rejoice to call these institutions our own, they are committed, for their very existence, to our agency and our liberality. While we bless God that he has honoured our

country so far, as to make it a sort of treasury of heavenly truth, let us see that we contribute to send out, in greater numbers, the heralds of that truth to the nations yet sitting “in darkness, and in the shadow of death.” If such a treasury is with us, we have received it, not for ourselves alone. Every human creature has a right to share in it. The angelic announcement of the gospel was “glad tidings which shall be to all people;” and the Divine Author of the gospel himself commandeth that it should be published to “all the world—to every creature.” But all the world does not yet possess this sacred boon ; the gospel of “light and immortality” is not yet preached to every creature ; the obligations therefore to fulfil the divine command must still attach somewhere ;—and where if not here ? Here is the land of Bibles ; here Christian resources abound ; and the wants of millions of other immortals have claims upon our fulness. One prominent duty, then, of christians, in the present day, is redoubled exertion in the support of societies now in operation for diffusing abroad the knowledge

of the gospel. Brethren! arise to greater effort. Is not the field of benevolence the world? Do not calls from every quarter, in still increasing numbers, and rising still louder and louder in their appeals, come upon you for your sympathy, your labours, your every expedient, for the supply of spiritual destitution, for the relief of them who are perishing for want of the bread of life? Look also at home. See the field spreading out from beneath your feet, partially, and but partially, occupied by Home Missionaries, City and Town Missionaries, Tract Distributors, and Sunday School Teachers; and let each one ask himself, "What can, what ought, I to do in furtherance of the high and holy objects, which these have in view? In what rank of Christ's labourers ought I to be found? Or, if personal labour I cannot give, what other offering can I bring to the altar of christian benevolence? "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Oh, if every true Christian in our land were stirred up to a self-appropriation of these solemn inquiries, what great things might we not anticipate? How mightily would the

word of God grow and prevail ! and that not at home only, but throughout the world. For, if the energies which these inquiries would naturally stimulate, were in actual operation, it would be a pledge of the Holy Spirit's effusion upon his people ; and the Lord our God would fulfil his gracious promise, and "open us the windows of heaven, and pour us out a blessing, that there should not be room enough to receive it."

4. Another feature of the present times, which I had specified, was, that many good things of ancient prophecy were in a course of fulfilment. The isles that were waiting for the law of the gospel, are now receiving it ; the earth is being filled with the knowledge of the Lord ; the long oppressed, but now ransomed captives, are singing the song of joy. These demonstrations of the truth and faithfulness of God, call powerfully upon us to avow our faith and confidence in every word of his mouth. We cannot, indeed, for a moment doubt "the sure word of prophecy." We know that the word of the Lord shall stand for ever ; "that not one thing shall fail of all the good things

which the Lord our God hath spoken concerning us—all will come to pass, and not one thing fail thereof;” but when the literal fulfilment of special portions of his word is displayed before us, we cannot but feel our faith increasingly confirmed, and our hope refreshed. It is then our duty *to claim that fulfilment as a striking testimony to the truth of the Divine records*, and by all the means we can command, to draw to it the attention of the world at large, that others may view it in the same light and glorify God. Of such occasions it is our duty to avail ourselves, to strengthen them who are weak in the faith to silence, if not convince, the gainsayer and the infidel; and to stir up Christians in general to a more attentive study of the prophetic portions of sacred writ, by strongly pointing them to certain prominent events of late years, and of the present day, of which we may boldly assert, “Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets.” This, my brethren, is an important profitable duty. By searching and studying the Bible predictions, and showing their ac-

tual developments in the movements of communities and nations, especially such of them as refer to the character and kingdom of the Redeemer, we profit both ourselves and them who hear us. We see and adore the hand of the Lord harmonizing with his word. We are vividly impressed with the fact,—“we believe, and therefore do we speak;” and in communicating with others on the grounds of our own confidence and joy, our pleasurable impressions and emotions are redoubled; for “whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.”

But hitherto we have spoken only of the better, the brighter signs of the times, and the duties obviously deducible from them. The portrait, however, which we are now contemplating, has its shades as well as its lights; its distorted and harsh as well as its comely and softer features. The times in which we live, with all the happy distinctions we have just acknowledged, are chargeable with many and grievous evils, which testify against us. The moral state of society at large exhibits a sad

contrast with the mercy and goodness of God. Vice, alas, in every shape, prevails around us ; and the godly in the land are now “ sighing and crying for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.” In our preceding discourse we took occasion to observe, that multitudes in the present times manifest,

1. An awful contempt of divine authority. Infidel principles are avowed and propagated ; the known commands of God are openly broken ; his adorable name is loudly profaned ; the sacred and venerable language of the Bible is impiously turned into ridicule, in the common conversation of vain and reckless men. That such evils as these should exist to any extent in a land like ours, is a humbling and melancholy consideration ; but it is truly deplorable to know that they are widely prevalent. The duty of the Christian, however, in such cases, is *not merely to lament, but to speak and to do.* He knows that he is, as an instrument, “set for the defence of the gospel.” While the believer in Christ is careful to walk in the light, “That his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God ;” and to ex-

hibit, in his own temper and conduct, the purity, the meekness, the benevolence of the gospel, he will not hesitate to rebuke those “by whom the way of truth is evil spoken of.” To this defensive warfare of Christianity we are each of us called. All, indeed, are not called to take the foremost ranks; but all who love the name of Christ will, in this age of ungodliness, find frequent occasions to check the boldness of profanity, or to warn the unwary against the foul spirit of infidelity when it comes abroad. Individual Christians can do much in this department of their warfare: let them be ever wakefully alive to the honour of their Lord, to the claims of his gospel, to the interests of his kingdom; and oppose the malignity of unbelief by “showing out of a good conversation their works, with meekness of wisdom.” Let all the amiable graces of christian morality be drawn out in living characters upon their own daily practice; and “the stout-hearted that are far from righteousness” will be attracted and won by the moral loveliness, and the scoffer will be bashed before the majesty, of the Truth.

This, indeed, is of all christian duties the first and most important. It is when we exhibit a true and fair transcript of the law of the gospel in our own character, that we most effectually disarm the keenest impugners of our faith, and shame into silence the tongue of the rudest blasphemer: experience has often proved this fact. It has ever been found that nothing has given the enemies of the cross so much power and license as the inconsistencies of professing Christians; so no instrumentality will ever check or change them so powerfully as a living christianity. It is not the censure pronounced in merely human displeasure; no, nor the address in "the enticing words of man's wisdom," that will overawe or win them: their pride and aversion are generally proof against such weapons as these. But, would the community of Christians maintain a holy walk and conversation; would they more invariably put on the Lord Jesus Christ before the world, how would ungodliness be discountenanced; and how would the workers of iniquity hide themselves! The spirit of evil would confess the presence of the Divi-

nity, would flee from the heart which it had been holding in bondage, and leave it convinced and converted under the power of heavenly grace. It is when they hear such Christians speak in the name of their Lord, that unbelievers will feel "the secrets of their hearts made manifest, and will worship God, and report that God is in them of a truth."

But, while it is the ever-binding duty of the Christian to embody his principles in his life, it becomes him also to give his best support to every proper measure for the dissemination of those principles through all ranks and conditions of men. For such a purpose, the various institutions before alluded to present themselves as legitimate and appropriate means. If we are sincerely desirous that the only healing balm for moral disease should be transmitted through all its ramifications in society, we shall either take our share in personally conveying it, or render every possible assistance to them who are already committed to the pious work. - Let us send the cure for the moral malady into those quarters of our land where it rages most destructively, by

aiding the excellent institutions now in operation; let us help their agents to carry the tread of life to the thousands around us perishing for want; let us circulate the holy scriptures and evangelical tracts more abundantly among our people, until the force of heavenly light shall chase the foul demon of infidelity out of every harbouring nook and lurking place, to the pit of darkness whence he came. The emissaries of our grand foe are straining every nerve, and putting every expedient into requisition, especially those of public lectures and the press, to spread the poison of their anti-christian doctrines. Let us meet them on their own ground. "We believe; let us therefore speak." Let us write, publish, and circulate the truth as it is in Christ. His cause will suffer nothing, but gain much, from fair and open discussion. Thus will light and knowledge be diffused; the pure flame of love to God and the souls of men, will burn stronger in the breasts of Christians; and the word of God, which is the sun of our moral world, will, at last, form a flood of radiance upon the false fire and glare

of every perverted intellect, and every wild imagination, and extinguish them for ever.

2. We observed also that multitudes around us betray a sad abuse of Divine mercies, and a defiance of Divine judgments. These are heinous sins in the sight of a just God, who is so repaid by the very recipients of his mercies, and whose rod has been defied by the rebels whom it ought to have reclaimed. The people of God cannot look out upon such doings as these without grief and apprehension. They will feel it to be their duty *to humble themselves before the Lord their God*; and after the example of Daniel, in behalf of his people Israel, present their supplications for the sinning multitudes around them, and for the land in which they dwell. Alas, for our people! how many of them, by their conduct, seem to say unto God, “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?” Breaking loose from the restraints of the Divine law, they fearfully multiply their transgressions before the Lord;

and their sins testify against them. Now, a great portion of the population, of whose irreligious conduct we complain, are our very neighbours. They walk our streets; they converse in our hearing; they do business with our households;—they are therefore daily within the reach both of our hands and our voice. What then, my brethren, have we, as Christians, to do? Surely we ought, *with increasing zeal and earnestness, to seek their recovery*; and by all scriptural means, labour to induce the “wicked to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and to return unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon him; and to our God, who will abundantly pardon.” The means which God has put into our hands for effecting this desirable issue, are many and various. Let us put them all into operation, and support them with increased liberality. Let us more powerfully assist in conveying the knowledge of salvation into the streets and lanes and alleys of our cities and towns. Let us, by domiciliary visits among the poor and unenlightened; by religious conversation; by prayer with them

and for them ; and by the distribution of God's word, where the want of it is found, labour to rouse the thoughtless ; to warn the profligate, and to impress all with the urgent necessity of fleeing from the wrath of God.—A work like this,—how shall I characterize it ? View it in whatever bearing, it commends itself to every kindly affection of the heart, and to every ready service of the hand. Piety, patriotism, and all that is excellent in philanthropy, invite us, urge us, into the service.—But what is more, the command of our Lord himself is upon us. “ Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind ; and into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” I rejoice to know that the obligations of this command, so plainly and impressively given by our Divine Master, are begun to be felt. Not a few of his faithful and devoted servants are now actively engaged in carrying the gospel to the poor ; to them who are destitute, both in temporal and spiritual means ; calling the wayward and the

wandering from their ruinous bye-ways, into the paths of righteousness and peace ; and penetrating into the hovels of the sick, the wretched, the outcasts of society, present them with the only balm, the only consolation, that can restore, refresh, and exhilarate their souls. The widow, and “ the fatherless, and he that had none to help him,” (more unhappy still through their ignorance of God, and their want of hope for eternity,) are here and there sought out and found by these agents of heavenly mercy, who open up to them the word of life and immortality, and the unsearchable riches of Christ. And now their afflictions seem light and momentary ; they learn to forget them in the delights of a new existence, in the anticipations of a glorious futurity. Under the transforming influence of the Holy Spirit working upon them, by their instrumentality, their old things pass away ; all things become new. They receive “ beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” How refreshing to know that work like this is now doing ! But, alas ! it is very partial

Wherever it appears, it is only like a minute strip of a vastly-extended waste brought into fruitful culture. Pray, ye, therefore, and use every exertion, that such labourers may be multiplied. Strengthen the hands, and encourage the hearts of them who are already in the field. Let Christians combine their redoubled efforts; let them resolve, in the wisdom and grace of their God, that they will not relax them, until all the waste shall be reclaimed; until "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;" until they see the blessing of God upon their labours, when "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

And now, brethren, having thus taken a brief and rapid view of christian duties arising out of the present signs of the times, suffer a few words of admonition on the spirit and manner in which they should be discharged.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren," says the Apostle to the Corinthians, "be ye steady,

fast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Such is the affectionate exhortation with which he closes a powerful and beautiful defence of the doctrine of the resurrection. Some of the Corinthians having doubted, and others denied this fundamental article of the christian faith, he felt it needful to prove and establish it, as that which gave weight and stability to all the other truths of the gospel. He then breaks out into the triumphant and exulting exclamation of a Christian already in possession of the glorious consummation; and calls on the Corinthian believers to come forward to the discharge of every duty of the christian profession, with that settled conviction of its entire truth,—with that unyielding firmness of principle,—and that increasing diligence and perseverance, in all their services, which the prospects of Christianity might well inspire. It is thus we are to explain the meaning and spirit of the Apostle's admonition. Following his example, we would beseech you, brethren, to pursue the duties of your christian profession with,

1. *A settled conviction of its entire truth.*

Our obedience, to be efficient and acceptable, must be that of “a perfect heart and a willing mind.” But this state of the heart and mind can result only from an honest and searching examination of the principles we profess. Whatever the nature and character of our duties, if we would discharge them aright, we must previously satisfy ourselves of the truth of their claims upon us. A clear and settled assurance that we are doing that which is well-pleasing in the sight of God, is the best foundation for steadiness of purpose, and a prompt and cheerful performance of every service. “Let every man,” says our Apostle, “be fully persuaded,” or assured, “in his own mind.” Without this, it is no right impulse under which we act. We may run to many good and christian-like services, impelled by the force of example, by the invitation or persuasion of others, or by some vain and interested motive; but with such sacrifices God is *not, cannot* be, well pleased. You know that without faith it is impossible to please God; but that faith which is the genuine fruit

of the Spirit is an enlightened principle, founded on a clear perception and settled conviction of the truth professed. This principle wanting, there is nothing in the character of a man on which you can rely. "Unstable as water, he will not excel." He fails in gaining confidence, especially in times of trial and difficulty. I fear, indeed, that many, in the present day, are to be found in the lists of benefactors to christian institutions, and not a few even personally engaged in christian services, who are not actuated by this holy principle, and have no settled conviction of christian truth. But God forbid that I should urge any man to the discharge of offices, in which religion is concerned, without this steady, self-satisfying conviction of the truths involved in them. No, however much I might long to see these offices discharged, and all their happy results accomplished, before I urged you to action, I would pray you to study the grounds on which they claim your exertions;—to pray for an enlightened view of your duty in their case; and, having obtained a clear and settled con-

viction, I would say, abide in it and act upon it. You will then come to the duty in the love of it ; whatever your hand findeth to do, you will do it with your might ; God will accept your work ; and you shall be blessed in your deed. It is the truly enlightened believer in Christ,—he who is rooted and grounded in the faith, who in the exercise of his duties, at once glorifies his Lord, and enjoys the satisfaction of a conscience clear in the sight of God,—such a Christian, when duty calls, has no misgivings in his mind, as to whether it will comport with his station in society, or be in any way inexpedient for him to engage in it. Enough for him that it is a work of piety, a service of christian love, a duty of human kindness or charity : like the Psalmist, “ he makes haste, and delays not to keep the commandments of the Lord.” His settled conviction of the soundness of his principles gives him a promptness and decision in acting, which the man who is moved by inferior motives seldom displays. The enlightened and fully assured Christian feels that he is not his own. Bought as he is with a

price, even with the blood of his Divine Master, he has nothing to withhold; is wholly at his Lord's command; and his labours, whether common, or more extraordinary, are rendered with delight, as his "reasonable service." Conscious that he has received the doctrines of the gospel, not as mere opinions and speculations, but as principles of character and conduct, he recognizes the duties arising from them; and the love of Christ constrains him to obey. It is thus his principle is vouched by his practice. The reality of his religion becomes visible and available. He impresses and benefits the community in which he lives; and his light so shines before men that they, seeing his good works, glorify his Father who is in heaven."—But,

2. We exhort you also to pursue the duties of your christian profession with *unyielding firmness of principle*. The Apostle writing to the Thessalonians admonishes them to "prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good;" an admonition of great weight and importance, which it is at our peril we neglect in either of its branches. We are, in the first

place, to guard against deception. Numerous are the errors afloat; and numerous the agents employed in their propagation. But, "beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Our Lord himself enjoins the same duty of caution and serious inquiry, in these emphatic words, "Take heed what ye hear." We are therefore under serious obligations to carefully examine whatever we admit as an article of our faith. The importance of this duty arises from its consequence to ourselves; for on what we believe our feelings, our sentiments, our conduct, in short, our character, are formed, and what, of course, must follow, our well-being for time and for eternity. Truth is the light of the soul, and essential to its safety. The eye is said to be the lamp, or light of the body. If that member be single, not vitiated by any distemper, our "whole body shall be full of light." In like manner, truth, heavenly truth, is inward and spiritual light. If we form our judgment and conduct on the maxims and doctrines of sacred truth,

we shall then be "light in the Lord. We shall walk as children of light, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." But we live in a world abounding in falsehood, subtleties, vain conceits, and wild and novel theories ;— all emanations from the father of lies, who has given them in commission to his emissaries ; and they are "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it," enticing and ensnaring the weak and the unwary. In this labour their success is various. Many they bewilder and draw aside, greatly to their discomfort ; while of others, pre-disposed to wander, they make an easy prey ; and bring upon them, as upon themselves, " swift destruction." How essential then to the right proving of all things is the aid of the Spirit of truth ! Blessed be God, this aid is promised ! Let us earnestly invoke his presence with us ; and he will "guide us into all truth." And having been enlightened by this Divine Instructor, and received from him the truth as it is in Christ, it is our next concern to "hold it fast." It is for the health and prosperity of the soul to be "immoveable" here. The infusion of this

truth into the soul is an act of grace which we cannot sufficiently prize. It is the one thing needful, without which there is no worth besides; the pearl of great price, which he that possesses it will hold with greater tenacity than life itself. The present, however, is a time of great trial of principle; and it becomes the special duty of those of us, who are more prominently set for the defence of the gospel, to exhort our fellow-christians to stand fast in the faith. Many professing Christians, in these days, seem to carry their religious principles very loosely about them. They may be said, indeed, to have no fixed principles at all, so easily do they suffer them to be shaken, or entirely dissipated, before, perhaps, the breath of ridicule, or the scorn of the world. Such is the weakness of mind in some, that their opinions turn round, like the weather-vane, to every accidental influence from without. They profess a conviction to-day, which to-morrow they give up for another. Truth, when presented to such minds, only glances through them, like a lighted torch passing the mouth of a vault, and without making a lodgment,

leaves them dark as before. They do not retain and cherish it with sufficient attachment to make it dear to their hearts, and they obtain no firmness of character. In a word, they are as the apostle describes them, "like children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." I would be understood, while speaking thus, as by no means alluding to secondary and non-essential points in religious persuasion. I am no advocate for a bigotted attachment to forms and modes of worship; nor do I ascribe to any one denomination of Christians an exclusive possession of saving truth, or of true believers. On these questions, I leave every man to form his own judgment, and to make his election of one, or the other, system, as he shall conceive it to agree best with the apostolic model. But as it regards the grand, distinguishing, doctrines of the gospel, we cannot, my brethren, be too urgent in exhorting you to continue "immoveable" in them. Those doctrines, it is true, present a humiliating view of the moral condi-

tion of man, as being radically and totally depraved ; but they teach us redemption solely through the righteousness and death of Jesus Christ ; and that this redemption is applied to believers by the agency of the Holy Spirit. These are fundamental doctrines ; to part with either of them is to part with Christianity itself. They demand, upon the authority of the oracles of God, the full credit of the mind, the inseparable attachment of the heart, and the entire reliance of the soul. Whatever tends to depreciate these simple, yet sublime, truths, is anti-christian, and therefore inimical to saving faith. Beware of the sophistries of men, who hate the gospel for its holiness, or despise it for the humility it teaches, and who seek to substitute their own flimsy theories based upon ignorance and pride. Look to the foundation of your faith ; and when you are assured that it is nothing less than that of the “apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,” let no force remove you thence. Maintain your standing in the strength of that grace which is promised to you in the gospel. Yield not implicitly to

any human authority. Resist without compromise, yet with all meekness, every attempt to impose upon you what are only "the doctrines and commandments of men." Study well the pure word of God, that you may be ready at all times, to meet such assaults upon your faith, with a "thus saith the Lord," remembering the maxim of the prophet, "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

The unbelieving, the self-righteous, the vain philosophers of the present day, are setting up their pretensions, exalting their systems, and decrying "the words of truth and soberness," with so much industry, and audacity, and craft, that they seem as though they would deceive the very elect. Be ye, therefore, admonished in the words of the apostle Peter, "Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness;" and in those of Paul to the Corinthians, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

That firmness and decision of character, in the service of God, are of prime importance, must be self-evident to every Christian ; and there is, perhaps, no injunction more frequently given in the scriptures than the cultivation of such a character. "Be strong," was the exhortation of Moses to Joshua, when he declared him his successor;" "Be strong," was the admonition of David, in his last advice to his son Solomon; "Be strong," cried the prophet, in anticipation, to them who waited for the consolation of Israel; "Be strong, O Zerubbabel; be strong, O son of Josedech; be strong, ye people of the land," said the Lord to the restorers of the temple; "Be strong," was the call which the apostle urged on the Corinthians, the Ephesians, and his son Timothy; "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." The acquisition of his moral strength is put in the form of a command, because of its essential value; but the qualities of mind and heart in which it consists, must be sought of God. It is a strength not to be formed and exercised out of a man's own resources. Like every other excellence

of the christian character, it is of divine operation. It is what the Lord did for his servant Paul, when he said unto him, "My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." It is furnishing the believer, as a good soldier of Christ, from the armoury of God. Every defence, and every weapon is formed and found by him who sends him upon the warfare. "We wrestle not," says the apostle, "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand, in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness ; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked ; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God ; praying always

with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."

Finally, brethren, this firmness of principle is needful for the right discharge of every christian duty, and for your consistency in the various relations in which you stand. You require its exercise for your own growth in grace, and your spiritual enjoyments ;—you require it, as good, faithful, and exemplary members of the church of Christ ;—you require it in behalf of the world, which tests the sincerity of your profession by the stedfastness of your principle ;—you require it for the glory of God ; for then is he glorified, when you shine in his graces ; when you are " strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." It now remains that I exhort you to discharge every duty of your christian profession with,

*3. Increasing diligence and perseverance.* " Always abounding," is the expression in the text, signifying an activity in well-doing, not only *continued*, but which, not content with what it has achieved, or is achieving, *is still aiming at, and effecting greater achievements.* It supposes the Christian actuated

by a principle, the vitality of which is expressed by stimulating him to accumulate exertion upon exertion, for the glory of God and the benefit of mankind. Acting in the spirit of him whose name he bears, he is a diligent character. He has no time for idleness. He follows the footsteps of a Master who "went about doing good," and whose meat it was to do the will of him that sent him." He remembers how he said, "I must work while it is day; the night cometh, in which no man can work;" and knowing, at the same time, that "the servant is not above his master," he feels that he also must work. It is a distinguishing excellence of christianity, that all its revelations have a practical bearing. Its professors must be practical men. They have much to do with God, much with themselves, much with the church, much with the world. Not that their doings, to whatever amount, are intended to earn, or ever can earn, a title to the least of God's mercies; but having received a new life by the Spirit of regeneration, its evidences will be manifested, both by what they become, and by the efforts they make to

serve God, from weaker to stronger efforts, and stronger thence again, as they grow in grace. The spiritual life is progressive. It has its “day of small things;” but it goes on from strength to strength. Its active powers are gradually enlarged; and industry and energy are, by and bye, displayed. In other words, the Christian’s sanctification of nature is seen and felt to grow in his hatred of sin, his avoidance of it in himself, and in his discouraging and checking it in others; in his love of holiness, cherishing it in his own heart, and zealously promoting it in the hearts and lives of others. As sure as any cause, in the natural world, produces its effect, so sure does the life of God in the soul operate those and other gracious effects in the character and experience of its happy subjects. “For we are his workmanship,” says the apostle, “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” The WORKMANSHIP OF GOD;—but is not this true of all mankind, —of all creatures?—Has not he made them all? Yes, and as they proceeded from his

hand, each was perfect in its kind, and declared to be "very good." But when sin had destroyed the moral nature of man, he could be restored only by a new creation. In the case of the Christian, therefore, God puts his hand a second time to the work, and creates him anew in Christ Jesus. He thus becomes, *specially* and *emphatically*, "the workmanship of God." Now, if the value of any work rises, in the general estimation, according to the dignity and excellence of the workman, what estimate ought we to make of the workmanship of God? Truly, the value of the genuine Christian is not to be told! The apostle, however, in this passage shows us in what the excellence of this spiritual creation, in a great measure, consists,—the exemplification of good works. The Christian is "*ordained*" to walk in them. Words can scarcely be more expressive than these, simple as they are, of the importance of increasing diligence and perseverance in the duties of a christian life. We are *ordained* to walk,—and what does this mean, but that every step of our pathway, through life, is to be marked by

something done for the glory of God?—Every movement is to find us in the position of servants, at work for their Lord.—Every thought, every purpose, is to be hallowed by its tendency to good works.—Every power, whether of mind or body, is to be consecrated to God and good works. In a word, if we are God's workmanship, his peculiar people, we shall be “*zealous* of good works,”—cultivating them not merely as occasion may present, but diligently seeking ways and means of doing good; passing from one act of piety to another, enlarging as we go, and longing and striving to overtake the evils that abound every where about us, with still more abundant remedies and appropriate antidotes,—constrained by the love of Christ, who died for us, that we should not live to ourselves; but, identifying ourselves with his cause and the spiritual interests of our fellow men, cheerfully “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service.”

This is to be increasingly diligent and persevering in the duties of the christian life,—to be “always abounding in the work of the

Lord." But "who," you will ask, "is sufficient for these things?" The true answer is that which the apostle himself has given, "Our sufficiency is of God." We are not of ourselves equal to the least of our duties; but God has promised us every needful supply. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." We can undertake no service for God, in which he cannot fully sustain us; for "in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." He enjoins upon his people no task, for the accomplishment of which he cannot bestow adequate means; he lays upon them no burden, which he cannot enable them to carry, during his pleasure; for "he giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength."

Come then, my brethren, let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord. Stir up the gifts and graces that are in you. Ply your heavenly course with

renewed vigour. Draw that vigour more copiously from above by urgent prayer. Go in the strength of the Lord your God ; and you will not then fail to “ walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” Thus will your own souls be enriched, and your joys will run high ; “ for ye shall eat the labour of your hands, and it shall be well with you.” Thus also will ye become the benefactors of your age ; for while you are thus blessed, you will become blessings. You will shine as lights in the world, by which some wanderers may be shown into the way of righteousness and peace. You will prove the salt of the earth, which, as you mingle with society, will preserve it from corruption, and draw the favour of God upon it. And thus, finally, like fresh-pruned branches of the true vine, you will bring forth more and more fruit, to the Divine Husbandman, your heavenly Father ; and your intimate relation to the vine will then be more clearly proved. God will look with complacency on the fruit of his own cultivation ;” “ your leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever ye do will prosper.” God will not.

forget "your works of faith, and labours of love;" but you will then realize in your own experience, the blessing with which Aaron and his sons were commanded to bless the children of Israel: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace!"

## LECTURE III.

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### THE DUTIES OF HEADS OF FAMILIES.

"And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do ; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation ; and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him : for I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."—Gen. xviii. 17—19.

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BRETHREN, we have been lifting up our voice, and calling upon Christians, in general, to observe the character of the times ; and urging upon their attention the duties arising from it. But, supposing this call, in many exemplary instances, well responded to, and the christian duties which have been recommended generally, and even efficiently, discharged, much

yet remains for the minister and pastor of a church of Christ to teach and inculcate. Our labours are not intended merely to multiply religious professors, or to gain to our Christianity the outward homage of the more prominent duties. These results are, in a great measure, already obtained. There has long been, and there still is, much religious excitement abroad; and this feature of the times is by no means to be depreciated. I do, for one, take delight in believing that many trophies are won to the Redeemer by such excitement;—many brought to consider their ways, and turn to the Lord;—many roused to examine the claims of the gospel, and cordially to receive its revelations, as the way to eternal life. But in the great majority, we have reason to fear, the good impressions have been but partial. Some, perhaps, have felt their profanities rebuked, and have laid them aside; some have forsaken their intemperate habits; some licentious characters have learnt to respect the decencies of life; and not a few, affecting to be esteemed the friends of religion, liberally commit themselves to the

support of the good cause, by their eloquence and their wealth. These moral reformations are so far honourable to the general influence of the truth. They are so many testimonies to its power and benignity. But how often, when we have beheld some truly pleasing exhibitions of character, are we ready to exclaim, "Would to God, that not only they, but all who hear the truth, were both almost, and altogether Christians."

Again, there are many of whom we are bound to hope still better things, who are yet far from presenting the beautiful symmetry of the perfect man in Christ. They are regular attendants on the public ministration of the word; they contribute, it may be, personal, as well as pecuniary aid to its support and propagation; they are commendably attached to that body of Christians, whose views of religious truth they consider most in harmony with scripture. We shall even find them tenderly alive to some important points of doctrine; and contending for them with laudable zeal. Yet in how many instances are all these manifestations to be found accompanied with

an exclusiveness and bigotry of temper detracting largely from the loveliness of the christian character! And how frequently may we observe people of this description warmly espousing and zealously advocating some truly christian sentiments, to whose practical importance they are strangely indifferent. Now, without going into a lengthened illustration of a fact so much to be lamented, I would, for the present, only remark, that in no case does this inconsistency more urgently call for notice, than in the neglect of personal and domestic religion. This is an evil, my brethren, which, even in this day of religious profession, abounds to a painful degree. In some cases, the neglect, especially of family religion, may be described as entire; while in many others, its obligations are but little acknowledged. Brethren, I need not say, this thing ought not to be. Religion, at home is indispensable,—is an integral part of our Christianity,—is not left to our option, whether we shall observe it, or neglect it. We are called by scriptural authority to a diligent, faithful, untiring performance of its various duties.

The word of God delivers plain and positive precept upon it, and refers us also to the example of the saints of old for our encouragement and guidance. Having, therefore, the “Duties of Heads of Families” for the subject of our present lecture, I have thought it well to direct your attention to the example of Abraham, who is honoured with the commendation in our text, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”

The age of this venerable patriarch was already threescore and fifteen years, when he received the divine call to leave his country and kindred for a land which he knew not. At that advanced period of life, he might well have been expected to wish for repose. To break up his connexion with the friends and the scenes of his youth, of his manhood, and even of his old age; to forego endearments of so long a standing, and to become, old as he was, a wanderer, with his wife and servants

depending on his protection, must have proved a severe trial to flesh and blood. But with flesh and blood he conferred not. It is the voice of his God, and his faith triumphs—he at once obeys. The command for his departure was, indeed, coupled with a distinguished promise: “I will make of thee,” said the Lord, “a great nation; and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” Besides, Abraham’s nearest relations had become idolators, and the impurities of their worship must have been hateful in his sight; but the promise was involved in much obscurity; its fulfilment was reserved for a distant period; and his personal circumstances opposed the most formidable difficulties. Nothing but a genuine, divinely-sustained faith was adequate to a trial like his, who, in the strong language of the apostle, “against hope, believed in hope. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and

being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform."

After many wanderings, and the lapse of three-and-twenty years, we find him in the plain of Mamre. There his tent, and the tents of his numerous servants and dependents, are pitched. His flocks and herds are feeding along the valley, and on the slopes of the neighbouring hills. He is himself seated at the door of his tent, seeking the coolness of the shade, in the heat of the day. He is here, perhaps, holding converse with his own heart on the ways of God towards him; dwelling with grateful emotions on the magnificent promises made to him and his posterity; and trying to bring before the eye of his mind the glories of that day which was pointed at in the memorable words of Jehovah, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Whilst he is thus sitting, and indulging, it may be, such reflections as we have supposed, a most interesting event occurs. "He lifted up his eyes, and looked, and lo, three men stood by him; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them, from the tent door, and bowed himself toward

the ground." He receives them, it is evident, with the respect due to personages of a highly superior quality; and proceeds to entertain them with all the generous rites of hospitality peculiar to the chief of tribes in that early age. Communications are then made to him by his illustrious guests, confirming the previous promise of an heir. Having, however, another, and an awful commission in hand, two of the three turned away, and went towards Sodom. Abraham is now left alone with Jehovah, who converses with him in a familiar and condescending manner. "And the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." What an interview was this for Abraham! The Lord speaks with him "as a man with his friend!" What an eleva-

tion is thus given to his character ! How powerfully does it commend the patriarch to our admiration and esteem ! But on this extraordinary occasion, what are the points of character graciously specified by the Almighty himself, as the grounds of his peculiar approbation ? They are his domestic and paternal excellencies, as bearing upon the religious training of his children and household. This fact deserves attention ; and upon this I shall ground what remains of the present Address. With a view to profitable meditation, I would observe, that Heads of Families are solemnly bound,

1. To cultivate *personal piety*.
2. To administer *suitable instruction* to their families.
3. To maintain *wholesome discipline* among them.
4. To conduct them to *public worship*.
5. To studiously observe the *exercises* of *devotion* with them.
6. To set them a *becoming example*.
7. To encourage and excite them to *general usefulness*.

Heads of families ! these are your obliga-

tions—these the requirements of your religion. They are, one and all of them, binding upon you. Which of them, indeed, can a christian parent dispense with? Whatever your condition in life, whether you are rich or poor; whether you move in the higher or humbler walks of society; whether you are called to active, prominent, and public duties; or live in seclusion and retirement, upon you, as heads of families, lie each and all of these obligations. Let me then beg your serious attention, while I endeavour to show that you are solemnly bound—

1. *To cultivate personal piety.* This is the first, the fundamental qualification of a christian parent and master. Upon this are based all his relative duties; this alone gives them their usefulness; this constitutes their value. There are official places in human institutions which may be filled, and their duties efficiently discharged, where piety of character is neither required nor professed; but the headship of a family is not a secular appointment; it is a station to which you are raised by the providence of God, to whom you are,

as moral agents, responsible for all its duties. Therefore, to be in a condition rightly to discharge them is the *first* consideration. You must be qualified for your station. And what is the main qualification required but personal piety? God claims your self-dedication to him, ere he can accept any service at your hands. As a professing Christian, you are, no doubt, trying to inculcate christian principles upon your children and household; but how is this to be successfully done, unless from the same principles felt and operating in your own hearts? What father among you would place his son to acquire the art and science of painting but with a scientific artist? And how is it likely that a family shall be trained to the knowledge and fear of God, under the direction of one who is ignorant of God, and who loves him not at his heart?

But, not to anticipate topics which I have yet to touch, I would beseech you to consider the importance of personal piety *in regard to yourselves*. The security of your own interests for time and for eternity requires it of you. Other things you may dispense with,

but lacking this, whatever else you have avails you nothing ;—there is no substitute for this. Without personal piety, you are no Christian. In what, then, does this indispensable, this essential article consist ? Certainly, to be evangelically and truly pious is not merely to assume the name and profession of religion. It consists not in the mere knowledge of religious truths ; for these may be speculatively known, where there is no real piety ;—nor in apparent rectitude of conduct, or the practice of many virtues ; for a graceless Herod could hear John gladly, and *do many things*. But if we would obtain a correct understanding of this question, we must draw it directly from the oracles of God ; and there we shall find it made to consist in nothing less than a transformation of nature, and a new life. According to this view of it, the apostle Paul gives us a beautiful, impressive, and comprehensive delineation of its living efficacy in the true Christian, when he thus speaks, “ I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of

the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." From this very lively description of experimental religion you learn, that while it presupposes a nature to be destroyed, it proves that a new and living nature is obtained;—that this new life is derived from and maintained by Christ in the soul; and that the natural life of the believer is a life of faith and confidence in the Saviour who loved him and died for him. The man who is possessed of this internal and living principle is "a new creature." He has undergone a change equivalent to a transition from death unto life. The old man with his deeds—the natural state—passes through a process of crucifixion, a slow and painful death. The Spirit of God, in renewing the man, leads him, according to the language of scripture, "to die unto sin;" prompts him, by motives arising from the death of Christ, to mortify every depraved affection, every unbelieving feeling; all pride, worldly-mindedness, and self-dependence. The same holy agency constrains him, by the love of Christ, to live unto God, to "put on the new man, which after God,

is created in righteousness and true holiness." Before, he was alive to the world, and dead to God ; but now, the world and he are crucified to each other. He is now alive to a better purpose. Those spiritual objects to which he was before insensible and dead, are now felt, fed upon, and enjoyed. He becomes the subject of a new life, for he has new joys and sorrows. He lives under a new state of moral views and impressions ; and exercises new desires and appetites ; for he has now "tasted the powers of the world to come," and hungers and thirsts after righteousness." He is now conscious of a life that is strengthening within him,—he both walks and works, and that "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" and what is more, this spiritual life grows so vigorous and energetic, that he is enabled to "war a good warfare ; to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life."

Brethren, this, and nothing less than this, is personal piety. This is essential to the well-being of one and all of us. And can the head of a family do without it, either for himself, or *for the station he occupies?*—

You are possessed, it may be, of all the means and facilities for ensuring worldly influence and prosperity. You can secure your family an ample provision for the comforts, and even the indulgences, of the present life. You can set up and maintain what the world calls a respectable establishment. You can place around your children the most finished masters and instructors in all the branches of a polite education ; and you can form them, by your domestic training, to genteel and elegant manners.—And what then ? Why, then you think all is attained that is desirable. They have a competent share of the learning of the age ; they are qualified to act their part in the best society ; and they bid fair to do well in the world. But if they are left strangers to the rudiments of sacred knowledge ; if they know not which be the first principles of the oracles of God, all their attainments is only a knowledge that puffeth up. It is an inflation of the pride and vanity natural to the heart, and it ministers only to self-adulation. Their familiarity with the arts of polished life operates only as a snare for their

souls. With all the pains you have been taking in conducting such an education, you have been laboriously fashioning them into daggers for your own breast. If with all their getting, they get not the fear of the Lord, they will not fear you;—if with all their taste for the refinements of the world—with all their love for the arts and sciences—they have not been taught the love of God, neither will they love you. Recklessness, dissipation, and all ungodliness on the part of your children, may be the sad fruits of all your labour. God has been left out of your account; his blessing has not been asked, or obtained; therefore are your fairest expectations blighted, and the canker-worm of bitter disappointment eats away your fairest hopes. “The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked.” I would therefore beseech every parent, every master of a family—as he regards the health and life of his own soul; as he would have the blessing of the Lord in his habitation; as he values the best interests of those who are dear to him as his own flesh; as he would provide for the sweetest consola-

tions of declining life—I would beseech him to cultivate piety towards God. I beseech every one, not him only who is actually in the station we speak of, but him who has it in prospect before him, to prepare for its responsibility, by cherishing in himself the knowledge, the fear, the love of God, to whom he is finally accountable. You all know the noble testimony which Joshua, the commander of the armies of Israel bore before the people of Shechem “Choose ye this day,” said he, “whom ye will serve; as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Mark how his pious resolution begins with *himself*, “as for *me*.”—He felt, and openly avowed his personal obligations. He is not more disposed to use his influence with his household, to lead them to God, than he was ready and willing, for his own sake and theirs, to choose the same God; and to devote himself and his services to his glory. Heads of families go ye, and do likewise. Examine yourselves by the pure law of God; try your hearts, and make deep search into your principles and motives; see that your thoughts and purposes,

your words and works, be all founded on evangelical truth. Acknowledge God in all your ways; pray continually that “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened.” And cease not your self-discipline, under divine direction, till you can say to all your domestic circle, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”

2. Heads of families are solemnly bound to administer suitable instruction to them. It is a trite observation, that, of all living creatures, the human being comes into the world the most helpless and dependent. It is, however, a fact that suggests lessons of no small interest and importance. It very impressively teaches us the strong claims that infancy has, in the first instance, upon the compassion, the support, and every kindly feeling of the parent. If man, at his birth, were not dependent on the aid of others, the sensitive tenderness of the mother, ever awake to the wants and the weakness of her infant

offspring, and all the endearments of confiding childhood, in the arms of parental fondness, would be unexcited and unknown. But in the actual condition of our nature, such is its wise and benevolent constitution, we are early taught the lessons of mutual dependence and protection, mutual kindness and gratitude, mutual sympathy and love, and all the elements of social happiness. From the nature and condition of this relationship arise the obligations of parents to their children. These are various. Parents have to care for both the physical and moral wants of their children; for their temporal and spiritual concerns. They have to make provision for their food and raiment; to pay a due regard to the health and comfort of their bodies; and to procure them an education, for secular purposes, suitable to their rank and prospects in life. But to detail and enforce these duties form no part of our present object. We have now to do only with the moral and spiritual interests of a family. We have to speak of that education to which the wise man alludes, when he says, "Train up a child in the way

he should go ;” or the apostle Paul, when he enjoins us to “ bring our children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” A pious and intelligent parent will be aware that the religious education of his children may be begun at a very early age. The infant mind opens soon. Impressions are made, and ideas formed, long before many are prepared to observe them ; and the consequence often is, that some of the best months for making favourable impressions are neglected and lost.

Many, indeed, from carelessness, or a false mode of philosophising, will let precious years slip away, without making any attempt at religious cultivation.—They tell us, that it is useless, or worse than useless, to anticipate the intellect, or pre-occupy the mind with words and phrases that cannot be understood. They insist upon the propriety of waiting the development of the mental powers, and the bent of genius, ere we interfere with a lesson in religion. We agree with them as to the futility of attempting to give instruction where there is no capacity to receive it; but we differ as to the time of commencing our

attempts. We hold it of great importance to watch the dawn of intellect; and seize upon it, as the signal for presenting to it the simple and plainer parts, which are at the foundation of a religious training. It is observable enough, that the advocates for delay are as ready as other parents to notice, with natural partiality, what they call the bright and promising parts of their children, when very young; and yet they are slow in admitting their capability to receive an idea in favour of religion. We deny not that there have been cases where this philosophy has been acted upon without mischief. I will mention one.

Dr. Beattie, in the life and character of his son, says, “He had reached his *fifth* or *sixth* year; knew the alphabet, and could read a little; but had received *no particular information with respect to the Author of his being*; because I thought he could not yet understand such information; and because I had learnt from my own experience, that to be made to repeat words not understood is extremely detrimental to the faculties of a young mind.” The doctor then relates how,

by causing some garden cresses to grow up in lines representing the initials of the child's name, he taught him, that as this could not come by chance, so neither did the world, nor the things of the world ; but that he, and all things, were designed and formed by the great First Cause, God, the Maker and Governor of all. "The lesson," says the father, "affected him greatly ; and he never forgot either it, or the circumstance that introduced it." This child grew up an amiable and exemplary youth, and died at the age of twenty-two, leaving behind him, young as he was, the character of an enlightened Christian. But with all the deference due to the opinions of such a man as Beattie, we hesitate not to say **THE EXPERIMENT IS DANGEROUS.** For one child that is left to reach his fifth or sixth year with "no particular information respecting the Author of his being," becoming subsequently truly pious, and that in his youth, there are thousands of others, who, from such an experiment upon their early years, have grown up, lived, and died, unknowing, and not caring to know, the Author of their being, or

the way of salvation. The inference from such a fact must be obvious to every judicious parent. The experiment will not be tried by any one who feels, that amongst *the first ideas* capable of being fixed on the infant mind, that of a God, the Maker and Preserver of all, should hold a prominent place.

On this question, I will take the liberty of opposing to the scheme approved and followed by Dr. Beattie, an authority which you will not, I think, deem any way inferior to his. Dr. Watts, in his Discourse on the Religious Education of Children, observes, that, "as soon as children begin to know almost anything, they may be brought to know so much of religion, as is necessary for their age and state." He then proceeds to enumerate, in a variety of articles, what he thinks young children may be successfully taught; and adds, "This is the sum and substance of the christian religion, drawn out into a very few plain articles; and I think a child of common capacity, who is arrived at *three or four years* of age, may be taught some part of these articles; and may learn to understand them

all, at seven, or eight, or nine ; at least, so far as is needful for all his own exercises of devotion and piety." With these sentiments we fully agree. It is evident that children, at the tender age he mentions, are the subjects of thoughts and ideas; since we constantly find them apt enough, though in their own imperfect language, to give them expression, and even reason upon them. And knowing that "these lesser pieces of human nature" are the hope of the coming age, are growing up to supersede us in all the business of life, and are possessed of souls, immortal and accountable as our own, how desirable, how needful is it, that one of the first and most impressive thoughts they are capable of forming should be that of God, their Maker? What so worthy of a first lodgment in the young and tender mind? But for urging the earliest possible instruction in religion, we have higher than human authority. We read that when infants were brought to our Lord, that he might bless them, he "called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of

such is the kingdom of heaven." The apostle Paul also, reminding Timothy of his early advantages, uses the same term, when he says, "From a child," or, as it may be rendered, "from an *infant* thou hast known the holy scriptures."

Long before the child can read, much may be done in infant tuition; and here maternal agency is most happily employed. A little child on its mother's knee listens, and that with breathless attention, to whatever new thing is told it in the tones of a voice ever welcome to its ears. At such moments how eagerly does the infant mind imbibe "the fresh instruction." Then it is, that when kindly and judiciously imparted, it makes the deepest impression, and commonly endures through life. A season this, the due importance of which is but rarely felt and improved. It is left in general to pass away unheeded; accidental circumstances operating, all the while, upon the tender and susceptible mind, to its evident injury. For it is not to be forgotten that we have here to do with a sensitive being, whose propensities, as soon as they are de-

veloped, tend to that which is evil. Whatever vain assertions may have been made to the contrary, we are sure that both scripture and experience pronounce that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." The wrong, therefore, done the young mind, by refusing a religious cultivation at an early period, consists not merely in the loss of time, but in allowing a mischievous process to take effect. Left to itself, it contracts evil and not good. Briers and thorns are the natural growth of the neglected soil. Let parents, therefore, who would do well by the precious gardens committed to their charge, begin betimes the needful cultivation. Let them avail themselves of the due season for casting in the good seed. Losing the spring, it will be vain to sow in summer; they will run the fearful risk of realizing the sad picture drawn by the wise man, "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down."

The instruction suitable to an early period is that which is most simple and plain. Children should be taught, as soon as possible, the being of a God, who is almighty, knowing every thing, and every where present ; who made them and all the world, who is the Author of all the good they enjoy ; and whom they, and all people ought to love, worship, and serve. This knowledge is the foundation of all religion, and of all moral rectitude in human character. Then, as age and understanding increase, they are to be taught that they are sinners, or evil doers, in the sight of God, and therefore exposed to his displeasure; that their bodies will die ; but that their souls will pass into another world, where they will be for ever happy with God, if they have been pious, or for ever miserable, if they have been wicked. They are to be led into the knowledge of the christian scheme of salvation, by unfolding to them the grace of God, in sending his Son in our nature, to our earth, to obey, to suffer, and to die for us, that we, through believing in him, might be saved. All these leading truths, with every depending

and collateral truth needful to be known, may be so simplified, that children shall profitably receive them much more easily, and more early, than many parents seem to be aware. The more assiduous, indeed, parents are in communicating such instructions, provided the times be well chosen, and the mode be kind and condescending, the more rapidly will their understandings grow, and the more easily will they take the practical meaning of every communication. And with what pleasure, with what thankful delight, must the intelligent and pious parent witness the growing and budding of those plants, about whose culture he is thus employed ! How supremely blessed is the man who, in the midst of a family united together by the ties of natural and moral affection, deals out amongst them the lessons of Christ's holy religion ; assured, at the same time, that they are gratefully received, and faithfully treasured up ! Nothing in the mirthful parties of the great and the gay can equal a scene like this : their's are most commonly chargeable with vanity and sin, and to be looked at with pity and regret :

his is a sight for the complacent eye of God himself, with whose grace he is inspired, and who will pronounce the blessing of Abraham upon him : “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him ; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.”

As to the aids of which heads of families may avail themselves, in conducting the moral and religious instruction of their household, these are, in the present day, sufficiently numerous. The Bible, however, being pre-eminently the fountain of truth, claims to be the **DOMESTIC INSTRUCTOR IN CHIEF**. As the Roman poet advises, in commendation of the Greek writers, we would beseech you, christian parents ! in respect to the Bible—make its sacred pages

“ Your supreme delight ;  
Read them by day, and study them by night.”

If children are to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, it must be on his own word. Those pages, it is true,

contain revelations of the sublimest order, and themes of which angels themselves are but imperfect students ; but the important truths which they deliver, for our present and eternal welfare, are reducible to a simplicity, and a plainness, adapted to young and feeble minds ; so easily intelligible, that “the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” The sacred writings, too, are possessed of powerful charms for the unsophisticated, unprejudiced minds of youthful readers : they present all the varieties of composition, in all their respective excellences ; history and biography recording facts the most striking and interesting in their character, and in a style the most pleasing and attractive ; and poetry in its grandest flights, and its sweetest and most pathetic strains ; but, above all, the revelations of God’s character and doings, and the truths that have “brought life and immortality to light,” even the “glorious gospel of the blessed God,”—these, these are the contents of the holy scriptures. In these, we again and again repeat, let your sons and your daughters be diligently instructed ; whatever

other learning they acquire, let them be well furnished with the knowledge which the Bible supplies. If it be gradually taught in portions, wisely selected according to age, disposition, and capability—if patient reiteration, and a cheerful persuasiveness of manner be observed in the teaching,—success will reward you. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”

There are, also, many excellent works of wise and good men, adapted to the instruction of the young and ignorant: a careful selection of these may be used by judicious parents with happy effect. Catechisms drawn up in a simple and plain manner, and made strictly conformable to bible-truth, will be found valuable auxiliaries in domestic instruction. With this let me strongly recommend to heads of families, frequent and free conversation with the household on matters of religion. A pious and skilful master will know how to make the events of history, the revolutions of the seasons, the labours of the field and the loom, the dangers of the mariner, the every-

day occurrences of life,—all tell to a moral and religious account. Heads of families, fathers, mothers, go, and thus fulfil your duties; and “ whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him ;” and not ceasing to pray, “ Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us ; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us ; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.”

3. Heads of families are solemnly bound *to maintain wholesome discipline among them.* Co-existent with parental instruction, must be parental government: without the latter the former cannot be carried on. Indeed no society, whether on the larger or smaller scale, whether national or domestic, can be held together without government. It is, therefore, essential not only to the order, but to the very being of the social state. Now, the primeval government among men was necessarily the patriarchal: the family was the first society, and the father was its natural head and governor; on him devolved its maintenance, its protection, its guidance; the appointment and

administration of its laws and regulations. To him the allegiance of all the branches of the family was due ;—to his superior wisdom and experience they owed reverential submission ; to his protecting and providing care they owed grateful service and faithful attachment. The patriarchal or paternal government, then, so far as the right of the father to rule his own house, is connected, being a constitution of things founded on the principles of our nature, is not, and cannot be, abrogated. The positive law of God, as well as the tacit law of nature, asserts this right. “ Honour thy father and mother,” says the law of God ;—“ let the dependent submit to his superior, on whom he depends,” is the law of nature ; and with both agrees the apostolic injunction, “ Render to all their dues ; honour to whom honour.”

The paternal government, wisely administered, is that “ wholesome discipline” which heads of families are bound to maintain. When it is so conducted as to be really wholesome, it is equally abhorrent from the despotism that would doom the family circle to

slavery and terror, as from that excessive indulgence which abandons children to their own inexperience, their own wayward wills, their own appetites and passions, and consequently to their final ruin. To avoid these opposite extremes much prayerful watchfulness and study will be needful on the part of the parent. Cases will often arise calling for the discharge of duties irksome to his own feelings, and he will be tempted to shrink from them: and, not unfrequently, duty will seem to oppose duty, placing him in an agony of uncertainty how to decide—truly, the wisdom that cometh from above is needed here! In the case, however, of a parent who has previously studied the duties of his station, and who enters upon them with humble dependence on Divine direction, such difficulties will either less frequently occur, or will be more easily adjusted. Acting on enlightened principles he will begin his discipline betimes: it is with this as it is with instruction, the dawn of reason is the time of commencement. To make the will of the child pliant, it must be early subjected to that of the parent.

Submission secured, ere an evil has been contracted, will generally ensure to all subsequent training a ready and cheerful obedience. On the other hand, if due authority be not early asserted, it will certainly prove *difficult*,—it may be altogether *impossible* ever to attain it. The bending of the young twig is a figure, in this case, not more common than it is expressive and just: let it be bent to the proper direction before it stiffens and strengthens into its own untoward form. The small gentle rill may be directed into any course by tracing a channel for it with the finger; but let it gain width and depth, and force, and your utmost effort will not turn it aside.

Again, discipline, to be wholesome, must be regular and unremitting; yet kind, calm, and rational. It is commonly found, that if parental discipline, or household order, be fitful and irregular—strictly maintained at one time and neglected at another—children and servants will speedily avail themselves of it to transgress, and learn ere long to hold all discipline in contempt. Firmness in supporting the rule is absolutely necessary to make it

respected; but its administration should be sweetened with uniform kindness; while calmness and uprightness will not fail to give it dignity and effect. "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged," is an apostolic injunction carefully to be remembered; but Solomon cautions us against the opposite extreme. "The rod and reproof," says he, "give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." Yes, under the best management, correction will occasionally be required. This, however, is administered in various ways, and in various degrees. In correction, whether by rebuke, remonstrance, restraint, privation, or by whatever other mode a judicious parent may deem best adapted to the case, the manner and degree should be such as to convince the offender himself that you have his good in view. All bitterness of passion, therefore, all harshness of tone; all hastiness of spirit, and whatever savours of caprice, or looks like selfish retaliation, must be avoided; and the gentler

expostulation used, which is most likely to move to penitence and persuade to reformation. In restraint and privation, much judgment is also requisite to guard against too severely galling or disgusting the feelings of the young and yet inexperienced mind: let kindness be the law of the house. And, finally, ye heads of families, I beseech you, whilst you labour to make your home the habitation of order and the school of wisdom, let it also be made the dwelling-place of piety and love, of harmony and happiness. Then will the God of all the families of the earth bless you; “the voice of rejoicing, and of salvation, shall be in your tabernacle; He will suffer no evil to befall you, neither shall any plague come nigh your dwelling.”

4. Heads of families are solemnly bound *to conduct them to public worship.* This obligation necessarily flows from and accompanies the right discharge of the two preceding duties, parental instruction and domestic discipline: all the three obligations are, in truth, but parts of the one great duty of christian parents to give their children a religious edu-

cation—in other words, to “command their children and their household to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment.” That christian parent who, whatever his domestic regulations may be, neglects to carry with him his young family, as soon as they are capable of good behaviour and some degree of attention, to the place of public worship, stops far short of his bounden duty: inconsistency and insincerity mark his conduct. Viewing, with an enlightened eye, his obligations to train them “up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” he would feel it to be an integral part of that training to conduct them to the house of God: no path should be more familiar to their feet than that which leads from home to the sanctuary. There, ought they early to witness, that they may in good time mingle in, the various services due from the collective church to her Almighty and Spiritual Head. In that sacred place, children and servants should be accustomed to consider themselves as taking part in the prayers and praises offered to God; and waiting, in common with others, on the mi-

nistry of his word. This practice will furnish the pious and conscientious head of a family with fresh and interesting topics of instruction at home. Surrounded by his domestic circle, it is a delightful and profitable exercise, after the services of the Sabbath, to bring the various subjects afresh to recollection, and indulge a free, yet serious, conversation upon them. This, however, supposes that circle to have been worshipping together at the same place: it supposes a union and agreement of mind on religious matters, which is certainly very desirable in itself, and most likely to ensure domestic order, harmony, and spiritual improvement: "Behold how good, and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Brethren, I would strongly urge upon you an attention to this character of family union. As far as your influence can be lawfully extended, let it be employed to obtain the willing attendance of children and servants at the same place of worship with yourselves. This order of things commends itself both by the advantages obviously attending it, and the evils it is calculated to prevent.

You are then, in a more complete sense, the guardian of your household. You are then distinctly aware, how far their public privileges work together with their private training for their general benefit; and you can then avail yourselves of the impressions they receive in the sanctuary, and follow them up at home with the happiest effect.

But the evils which this companionship in public worship usually prevents, are no less obvious: we well know that young people are apt to aspire at independence in thinking and acting, long before it can, consistently with their own safety, be conceded to them. It is not in green youth to direct its own steps: but let this premature independence be obtained; let them wander to what places of worship they please, and we shall find such liberty invariably abused. Young and ignorant persons, left to their own discretion, most commonly start off into vanity, disorder, and dissipation; but ill acquainted with themselves, they know less of the world around them. They are for ever making a false estimate of men and things; and fall, in consequence, the victims of their own fond conceits,

and the fascinations of an ensnaring world. Consider, also, the vast diversity of religious denominations prevalent in our day, and the almost innumerable shades of difference in talent and taste, in worth and weight, among the teachers of these denominations, and it is easy to see that the inexperienced and unguided mind is in fearful danger of either settling nowhere, or cleaving to the wrong. Besides, an unchecked range in matters of such grave importance, will always incline the young possessor of it to claim a similar independence in every thing else. Then, farewell to parental control,—to domestic order,—to all the moral beauties you had fondly hoped to see open upon your offspring ! While, therefore, they are yet incapable of judging for themselves, let your children accompany you to the house of God. Induce them, as they grow up, by all fair and scriptural means, to prefer the same ministry with yourselves. The advantages of a regular and continued accordance in this matter, are self-evident, and confessedly great. We deny not, at the same time, that when children are grown up to an age to think and act for themselves, the judi-

cious parent will admit their claim to the freedom of conscience: the children then have responsibilities of their own which they cannot devolve upon another. What is then left to the parent is simply the influence of reasoning, of caution, of advice, of scriptural admonition, and of prayer for the Divine blessing on the use of such means. Let all this be done in the spirit of kindness; let your children and household be fully assured, from the general tenor of your conduct, that it is their spiritual benefit you have at heart; that every expression of your will is prompted by love to God and their souls; and is, at the same time, in harmony with the principles which regulate your own lives; and either acquiescence in your particular views, or a procedure which you cannot blame, will be the result.

5. Heads of families are solemnly bound *studiously to observe the exercises of devotion with them.* The domestic altar is an essential institution in a christian household: the gathering of the family there every morning and evening, is the homage which they owe to the God of all their mercies: at that

altar they present their offerings of thanksgiving, praise, and prayer. The head of such a family says with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." His habitation is a temple of praise to Him by whose blessing he beholds "his wife as a fruitful vine by the sides of his house, and his children like olive plants around his table." He rejoices to bear testimony before them all, and with them all, to the goodness and faithfulness of God, who preserves his tabernacle in peace, and "makes him to dwell in safety." At the domestic altar he appears as the priest of his household, to intercede for them: he is the organ and voice of their gratitude, their prayers, and their praises. Charging himself with the spiritual cares of each suppliant bending at this altar, he spreads every case before the Father of mercies, in the name of the Great High Priest above. He prays for them in a manner, and in a language, which may suggest to every one of them how and what he should pray for in his own behalf.

Prayer in the family has a highly improving effect on each of its members. In this exer-

cise, more than in any other, the husband, the wife ; the father, the mother ; the children, the brothers, the sisters ; the master, the servant ; —all, in their several relations, are drawn near and endeared to each other with a holy attraction. Blessed exercise ! What christian parent—what master of a family, having any feeling of his responsibility—can be insensible to this ? Who that knows the worth of family devotion, does not hold it dear and precious as a privilege, while he acknowledges it binding as a duty ? With a family thus conducted, however humble in the eyes of the world, “the God of the families of Israel,” condescends to dwell. The wealthiest and highest-titled scorner of religion in the land, is awfully mean in the sight of heaven, compared with the father of such a family. “It is well with him ;” his God makes a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side.” Happy is the spot where piety finds a home ; where the love of God and the love of each other, the two great commandments of the law, are daily cultivated ; where the voice of prayer and of praise as-

cends to their heavenly Father from the heart-moved lips of an affectionate and united family; for "there the Lord has commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." There has he promised peace; for he has said, "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Heads of families! you hear your obligations, you hear your encouragements to this exercise. Is a deficiency here chargeable on any of you? Neglect it no longer; your profession demands it of you; success on all your other efforts for the entire welfare of your household demands it of you: you cannot withhold it without injustice to yourselves, and to those by whom you are surrounded. Our good old forefathers were men of prayer, and they knew not how to esteem him a Christian who neglected family-devotion: they held it of such importance, that they suffered no other concern to put it aside. Their secular

arrangements, whether at home or abroad, were so made as to respect the hour of this social duty. They set about it in an orderly and reverential manner, and reckoned no day hallowed, or rightly spent, which was not begun and ended with family-worship. Go, follow their example. In the performance of this duty, choose the proper season for it. Drive it not off to a late hour, when you and the family are fatigued and heavy with sleep : let portions of scripture be read at the time. Avoid cold lifeless formality. Be spiritual and fervent in your supplications ; but let not the exercise be lengthened out to weary and burden the attention of the younger minds. Thus will you enjoy the service yourselves ; thus will you lead your families with you ; God will be glorified, and your houses will be blessed !

6. Heads of families are solemnly bound *to set them a becoming example.* We have spoken of personal piety, as essential to fit the head of a family for his station. We have urged upon him the duties of instruction, of discipline, of attendance on public worship,

and of family prayer. All these, if well considered and duly acted upon, will go far to exhibit the sterling worth and loveliness of a christian family ; but a few things yet remain. To establish and confirm, in the sentiments and characters of the younger members, what precept and discipline may have happily begun, there is need of example on the part of the parent. Children may be constrained to learn the lessons of the instructor, and be controlled into good behaviour, and yet remain unimpressed and unconvinced : they must *see* as well as *hear*. Heads of families should be aware that young people are keen observers : the powers of observation are early developed ; they very soon become close spies upon your conduct ;—aye, and shrewd reasoners, too, upon the moral of it. It is natural, indeed, for them to receive your instructions with implicit credit at first ; but they look to see your avowed principles embodied and exemplified in your own life. Disappointed here, no wonder if they become sceptical on the matters you have sought to teach them. In proportion as they readily

believed your lessons at first, will they, on seeing them belied in your conversation, be tempted as readily to treat them with scorn, and deny their truth. Oh, how dangerous to youth is the inconsistent walk of a parent calling himself a Christian! I would entreat him to consider what a powerful, though to him, perhaps, an unperceived influence, he is exerting. He does not, he cannot, sin alone : he is, as far as his bad example goes, dragging his offspring and his household with him. Think not you can make your young family *do as you say*, rather than *do as you do*. We are all of us creatures of imitation : it is a principle in our nature, but in our younger years it acts with its greatest strength. We are then incessant copyists ; and what patterns are we most likely to copy ?—those, undoubtedly, that are nearest to us, constantly before us, and received at first as the most correct. Heads of families ! avail yourselves of this aptitude in your children ; do not content yourselves with giving them excellent advice, —with fine representations of the beauty of virtue and religion : without seeing them illus-

trated in your own character, they will feel as if they were looking at some fine paintings confessedly beyond their imitation: you must yourselves be the living proofs of their practicability. Let them see in your temper, your conversation, your whole deportment, a fair exemplification of the principles you inculcate. Strive to show yourselves before them and the world, in all matters of moral worth and holiness, "living epistles, known and read of all men."

Would you approve your sincerity in laying down the rule for others? you must follow it yourselves. Would you impress others with a conviction that you believe and love the doctrines which you teach? you must cherish them in your own hearts, and bring forth their fruits in all holy conversation. Would you have the warmest desires of your heart, the tearful prayers of your lips, graciously heard and answered in behalf of your children? you must cultivate self-denial, spirituality, and heavenly mindedness. In fine, if you would have them walk worthy of the Lord, in all well pleasing, you must so walk yourselves.

Go to the royal bird, and learn of her when she is teaching her young brood to fly : " As an eagle stireth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings :" so, while you are pointing your offspring heaven-ward, climb ye the way thither with them :

" Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way."

Then may you hope, that, when it shall please your heavenly Father to call you up to your eternal rest, you shall have the high satisfaction of addressing to your family, gathered around your dying couch, this apostolical appeal : " Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unbleamably, we behaved ourselves among you. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming ? For ye are our glory and joy ! "

7. Heads of families are solemnly bound *to encourage and excite them to general usefulness.* It enters naturally, and of course, into the instructions communicated in every christian family, to acquaint the younger branches,

as they grow up, with the state of society around them. They will be accustomed, if rightly trained, to study it in connexion with the services it may seem to claim at *their* hands. Without doubt they should be early instructed in the benevolence of Christianity. They should be shown that it ever turns a benign aspect on mankind ; that its tendency is to inspire its professors, young and old, with a kind and charitable spirit towards the species ; and that its Great Founder, who, when he was in our world, “ went about doing good,” left us an example that we should follow his steps. Such instructions as these, enforced by practical exhibitions, are seldom known to fail of the desired effect. Children and servants, thus happily privileged, grow up in the knowledge of their respective duties ; and learning to acquit themselves of them at an early period, contract a liking for benevolent action, which, for the most part, continues through life to increase and strengthen in them. The consciousness of being, in any degree, useful to society, is gratifying to an ingenuous, uncorrupted mind ; and it is to young persons of

this description, especially if they be conversant with the religious part of the community, we must generally look for eminent piety and efficient service. Let your children, then, be early encouraged to imbibe the spirit of that charity which becomes the gospel ; that expansive charity, which, flowing from supreme love to God, the heart's highest motive, descends to every one of the human family, widening in its manifestations, as they advance in life, from the relief of a beggar at the door, to the support of schools, hospitals, and the various benevolent and religious institutions of their native land. Let them be early led to witness the order and excellence of our Sunday Schools, and be invited to render their personal assistance there. Let them be taught the economy and utility of our Tract, our Bible, our Missionary Societies. Let them learn, from their early years, not only to respect and love these institutions at heart, but, as their age and means increase, to seek to promote their efficiency, with all the power they have at command.

We urge these things on parents and the

heads of families, not only as being in themselves lovely and of good report, but as religious duties, which the actual state of the church, and the world at large, has made binding on every Christian who has any influence with the young. It is a solemn duty which we owe to our Lord and Master to enlist the rising generation in his service, and to bring them into the ranks of his soldiers, according as they shall be qualified by himself "to come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

Christian parents, you will perceive, from what we have advanced, that the duties devolving upon you are important in the highest degree. They involve, as it regards yourselves, a due sense of your accountability to God, who says to you, of each one of your offspring, "Take this child and nurse it for me." And as it regards your families and household, they embrace every element of their well-being for time and for eternity. But they are not less arduous than they are important. You cannot look at them without a feeling of absolute insufficiency of yourselves

to discharge them. The feeling is just. No human resources are equal to them. But be not dismayed. He that calls you to these duties knows what gifts and graces you need to qualify you for them. He has them all at his disposal; "wisdom and might are his," and he is ready to bestow them. When he calls to duty, he expects you to ask him for the grace required. Is your duty perplexing?—pray to him, with David, "Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness, make thy way straight before my face." Is it onerous, and hard to bear?—think of the encouraging invitation of your Lord; "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." And why does he thus invite, but to intimate that his assistance will be afforded to make the yoke and the burden easy and light? Are your duties severe and trying to your natural affections?—"the Lord loveth the righteous; the trial of your faith worketh patience; and blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

I would say, then, to every Christian parent who duly feels the responsibility of his station, and is anxious to acquit himself aright before God, "Go in his strength, and fear not. The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion!"

But you are not all christian parents, though you assume the name. Some of you are void of religious impressions, and "God is not in all your thoughts." No doubt you love your children. Natural affection is strong within you. You are not indifferent to what you reckon the welfare of your family. You are sufficiently anxious to provide for them "what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed." You secure to them, it may be, what you consider a good education, and set them in a way of what the world calls "doing well for themselves;" but unenlightened by divine truth, and strangers to the grace of God, you feel no concern for your own salvation, and neglect the immortal interests of your children and

household. We pray you consider your position. Independently of your own danger, you are hazarding the never-dying souls of those who are parts of yourselves, and for whom you are accountable. Neglecting to train them for God, you are abandoning them to sin, Satan, and everlasting destruction. What then, is the religious character of your children nothing to you? Is it nothing to you whether they are the objects of God's favour, or his wrath; whether they are going in the way to heaven, or to hell? Surely, if you thought that such weighty considerations were depending on *your* conduct, you would be deeply concerned that that conduct should be correct. Were you sufficiently aware of the awful responsibilities resting upon you, as parents, you would be most anxious to learn how you could fully meet them. But responsibilities infinitely more awful than we can describe devolve upon you; considerations vastly more grave than we can explain arise from your parental and domestic relations. Repent ye, therefore, of your past negligence. "Acquaint yourselves with God, and be at

peace ; thereby good shall come unto you. Receive, I pray you, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in your hearts. If ye return to the Almighty, ye shall be built up ; you shall put away iniquity far from your tabernacles." Then, instead of the briers and thorns which your former negligence suffered to grow, you will see "the fir-tree and the myrtle-tree" grace the moral soil around you. Instead of the painful spectacle of children and domestics running riot in vanity, and falsehood, and every vice, you will behold your sons "as plants grown up in their youth, and your daughters as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace,"

## LECTURE IV.

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### DUTIES OF CHILDREN AND SERVANTS.

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THE religion of Christ is the only system of moral truth which provides for the best interests of man in all his possible relations. To do this it meets him precisely as he is, in all of them. There is no tendency in any of its principles to delude him. It presents him with no flattering portrait of himself; but deals with him as a fallen, erring, and depraved creature. As such, it addresses him in his every capacity—his personal, his social, his relative; and that with a view to heal and to restore. There breathes throughout our holy religion a spirit of commiseration and benevolence, so winning, yet so dignified, as to prove itself divine. There is a wisdom in it, claiming our serious, our undivided attention, with

an earnestness and an authority which belong only to absolute truth. It cries, “Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is unto the sons of men. O ye simple, understand wisdom; and ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. Hear, for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things. For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.” The voice to which we are thus summoned to attend, reveals to us both our bane and our antidote. On the one hand, it tells us faithfully and forcibly of the guilt and bitterness of our departure from God; and on the other, kindly and compassionately points us to the way of return to God, and recovery of life and happiness. This is its great object. The chief mercy of God in redeeming mankind is the grand burden of the voice that speaks to us from his word. For the revelation and offer of this mercy has his word been sent to us. But that word is perfect: it bears upon every element of man’s well-being through his entire existence. It is a code of instructions “profitable unto all things;” ‘providing for

the concerns “of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” It is true, that it has, for its grand and leading article, our instruction in the only refuge appointed for our guilty race; but it claims also the supreme and exclusive direction of all our visible conduct. It follows us with its rules and its counsels into every grade we can occupy; into every position, every employment, every relation we can sustain in life. In each of these it requires us to be formed on its own principles. He whose name we bear, in saving us from our sins, puts us into his service;—a service, not only compatible with the existence of all our social relations; but which, in a great measure, consists in the right discharge of their various duties. Accordingly, the precepts and admonitions of his word extend to all the conditions, and to all the shades of difference in the conditions, of men among themselves. They regard the happiness of society at large, and lay down the law for the rich and the poor; for governors, and for the governed; for parents, and for children; for masters, and for servants; as well as for all that hold offi-

cial stations in the institutions of society. To show you this, I need only refer you to the 6th chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, from the 1st to the 9th verse inclusive:—

“ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your master also is in heaven: neither is there any respect of persons with him.”

Of these practical admonitions some have been already brought under our consideration. The duties of parents and heads of families occupied our attention in the last discourse; we are now to consider those that belong to the subordinate members of the family and household,—children and servants. By the term *children* we are not to be understood as meaning those only of *tender years*: we include such also as are grown up to years of maturity,—our youth—our young men, and our young women; “those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” And by the term *servants*, we mean not *menials* only, and those employed in the lowest services of the household; but those also in the counting-house, and the warehouse; and such as are in places of trust and responsibility under their employers.

In addressing those of you who stand in these relations, I would point your attention, in a special manner, to the fact that the apostolic admonitions lay the foundation of the duties and services you owe to your *fellow-*

*creatures* in those you primarily owe to *God*. It is “in the Lord” that filial duties are to be discharged; it is unto Christ, as doing the will of God, “that servants are required to obey them who are their masters according to the flesh.” There are therefore three classes of duties which it becomes me to press on your serious consideration:—

- I. Those which you owe to God.
- II. Those which you owe to PARENTS AND PRINCIPALS.

- III. Those which you owe to EACH OTHER.
- According to this arrangement you will see, my young friends, that I have taken upon me to speak to you for God, for your parents and superiors, and for yourselves. But on each of these topics, and not on one only, I need hardly tell you, it is *for yourselves* I still speak. It is the promotion of your best interests at which I aim. In maintaining the claims which God and man have upon you, I am but showing you the most direct means for ensuring your own prosperity,—your own happiness for time and for eternity. We are all of us accountable beings. An absolute in-

dependence belongs not to any grade or condition of human life. That person, then, who, whatever his situation in society, fulfils his obligations best in the sight of God and man, is the most honourable and happiest among men.

"Honour and shame from no condition rise ;  
Act well your part—there all the honour lies."

To assist you in the knowledge and fulfilment of your various obligations is my present object. With this view I beseech you to seriously consider your duties,

1. To God ;—He is your Maker, your Preserver, your Benefactor. You owe him—

1st. *The love of gratitude.* The first of all the commandments is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." This supreme love you owe him for his goodness; and consider how largely you share in the manifestations of his goodness. Look around you upon creation; and contemplate whatever there is of beauty and bounty therein displayed; and think of the gratifications and the supplies you per-

sonally derive from them. Take a closer and more circumscribed view, and look at the social advantages among which you are centered; think of your relatives and your friends of every description, who guard and who guide, who counsel and who comfort you;—and to whom are you indebted for all these? to God only, the author of all good. It is his beauty and bounty you love to contemplate in creation;—and he it is who has encircled you with all the friends you can reckon, from the mother who nursed you at her breast, to the latest benefactor of your youth. But look still closer at home: think of his providential kindness to your own person, in preserving you in life and health; in affording you the means of moral improvement; and especially and above all, if the Holy Spirit has blessed the privileges of the gospel to your conversion to God. Oh, how much do you owe to your Lord? What adequate returns can you make to him? You owe to him all the powers of which you are possessed; you owe him your whole selves! How ought you to open your whole souls to the love of God, who has

thus first loved you! Under a due impression of the number and greatness of your obligations, you will cheerfully join with David in his song of praise,—“ Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits : who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.”

2. You owe to God *a fixed and steady faith in the revelations of his word.* It must be obvious to every one who makes a right use of his understanding, that if our fallen race were ever to know the mind and will of God, a revelation from himself was absolutely needful. This revelation has been made : God, in his infinite wisdom and mercy, has revealed to us, in his word, his own character, his will, and his doings. It becomes you, my young friends, to receive that word with reverential gratitude, to study it with prayerful diligence, and to yield to its contents the homage of your implicit faith and confidence. No communication can come from God that deserves not the confiding ac-

ception of his creatures ; but if it be a communication of unmerited love and goodness, it demands a ready, a cheerful, a grateful faith. Receive then the scriptures of divine truth, as they are indeed the only true guide, in the path of wisdom, to everlasting life. Put away from you all vain scepticism and unbelief. Ask the light of the Holy Spirit to shine upon his own word, and reflect it impressively upon your souls ;—then will that blessed agent come, unlock the treasures of the heavenly kingdom, lead you into his marvellous light, and “ establish, strengthen, settle you in the faith.”

3. You owe *obedience to the precepts and admonitions of the word of God*—faith, love, and obedience, are all united : faith operates by love, and obedience is the fruit of both. “ If ye love me,” said Christ to his disciples, “ keep my commandments.” This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.” It is in the nature of love to seek to please its object ;—if, therefore, you love God, you will do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And your love to God, and your reliance on

his word, will not merely suggest to you this obligation to obedience, but make obedience itself a pleasure. While you contemplate God with emotions of filial gratitude, as your Father, you will be delighted in acknowledging him as your law-giver; and whatever gratifications you may derive from your services to a fellow-creature, your chief satisfaction will be found in the consciousness of pleasing God. The more you cultivate love to him in your hearts, the more pleasurable will be obedience to his will. "I delight," says the apostle, "in the law of God, after the inward man." And the Psalmist exclaims, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." Again, the practice of obedience to the precepts and admonitions of God's word, is not only pleasurable, but highly profitable, to him who loves God. David speaks of them as "sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb;" and declares, at the same time, that "in keeping of them there is great reward." If such be the happy state of your hearts, and such the sweet experience of which you are conscious, you will readily acknowledge that—

4. You owe to God *the devout worship he prescribes in his word.* Of obedience to the divine precepts we have just spoken in general terms : we would now in a particular manner, yet briefly, urge your attention to that expression of his will which God has made in his word, respecting the *worship* he requires. That God is to be worshipped, is a fundamental doctrine in all religions, true or false : here we have to do with the true and ever-living God, and the worship due to him. This he has prescribed in his own word ; the lip of truth has there taught us that “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” The worship he requires is, therefore, spiritual. Adoration, prayer and praise ; the hearing of the word of God, and meditating upon it, which are all parts of christian worship, must be exercises of the heart and mind. The nature and character of the Deity himself suggest, in a great measure, the kind of worship which he will accept. He is in himself the incorporeal, all-wise, omniscient, and altogether holy, Spirit ;—nothing, therefore, merely ex-

ternal, no bodily exercise, no pomp or ceremony, can be to him sufficient, or satisfactory worship. The attitude of adoration without the heart, is solemn mockery ;—the voice of praise without heart-melody, is “ sounding brass and tinkling cymbals ;” the language of prayer, if the soul is not in it, is an abomination ; and to come to the house of God as his people come, and to sit before him as his people sit, while the heart is far from him, is an hypocrisy which God abhors. Whatever worship you offer to God, however splendid it may be in the sight of men, however acceptable to human ears, if destitute of the heart, is rejected of God.—“ What is the chaff to the wheat ? saith the Lord.” He claims the heart as his due ; and, rather than go without it, he condescends to ask it as a gift. He says to each of you, as you draw near to worship him, “ My son, *give me thy heart.*” He will, he can, accept of nothing less. Young professors, consider this ! Charge your souls betimes to reverence the Lord your God, and to render to him a holy and a pure worship. Remember the words which he spake by

Moses, saying, “ I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me.” This he still demands of his worshippers; and, as he cannot be deceived, think of the fearfully perilous ground on which the heartless formal worshipper must stand before him. “ Search, therefore, and try your ways, and turn again to the Lord: lift up your heart, with your hands, to God in the heavens.” Let me press upon each of you, as you would deprecate the wrath of the Most High, as you would be approved and accepted of him, to take to yourself the solemn admonition of David to his son:—“ And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off for ever.” Let every young person who hears or reads this sacred counsel, appropriate it to his own benefit: let him enter devoutly into its spirit, and make it the law of his practice. Then will he know the blessedness of the man “ whom the Lord

chooseth, and causeth to approach unto him, that he may dwell in his courts, and be satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple." Once more,—

5. You owe to God *the grateful reception of the Saviour provided and offered in his word.* We have already observed that you owe to God a settled faith in the revelations of his word,—in all the communications he has there made to you; and that the great burden of these communications is his mercy, —his *chief* mercy, in the redemption of sinners. Now, that redemption is plainly revealed as effected by the mission of his own Son to our earth, in our nature, and in our stead. The guilt of the world in departing from the living God, in despising his goodness, in violating his holy law, had placed it in a state of rebellion against him. The moral nature of man was thus defiled in the sight of God ; and for any means in himself for reconciliation, utterly helpless. In this condition lay the whole race, individually, as well as collectively, before a just, yet a merciful God. We had thus ruined, destroyed ourselves ;

and not one being, either of our own race, or among the angels of God, could be found to act the part of a “day’s-man betwixt him and us, that he might lay his hand upon us both.” Yet God, though the offended party, beheld us with pity; and, to use the striking language of his own word, when he passed by us, and saw us polluted in our blood, he said unto us, “live!” But how was that life to be secured? God himself provided a “Day’s-man, who alone was able to lay his hand upon *us*, to shield us from the stroke of justice; and to lay his hand upon *God*, to stay the fury of the avenger. In other words, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” Such is the grace of God'; and such is the Saviour of his appointment. You owe, therefore, to God’s unmerited love,—you owe to your own eternal interests a ready, a grateful, acceptance of this Saviour; “for neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.” And God magnifies his grace still

farther, in condescending to use every kind, every inviting argument in his word, to induce you to receive the Saviour. "Him that cometh unto me I will, in no wise, cast out." "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Many warm invitations, many stirring ex-postulations, are used to win the sinner to Christ. Many warnings are also given against refusing, or delaying, to receive him. But, alas! my young friends, you may hear this, you may read all this, you may assent to all this, and the Saviour, after all, be refused. Your understandings may admit the truth of the word, and your hearts may be shut against its entrance. You may be fully, minutely, acquainted with the communications of truth in the word of God, and yet be strangers to their power. You may take up the doctrines of grace in the holy scriptures, and by the application of your own faculties of thought and attention, you may do much to comprehend their meaning;—you may even taste their beauty;—you may admire their excel-

lence; but to become the subjects of their converting and quickening power, an agency without you, and above you, must be employed. To come effectually to Christ you must have a guide. That guide is the Holy Spirit. It is his gracious office to "guide you into all truth; and to take of the things of Christ, and show them to you." When they are contemplated by the natural man, there is a veil upon his heart, so that he cannot truly discern them. Neither can he of himself remove that veil. It is taken away only by the Spirit of God; and then are the deep things of God revealed; then "he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." The light of the Spirit has a power peculiar to itself;—it transforms, converts, purifies. The apostle, speaking of believers, says expressly, "We all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." And in another place he tells us, that "as

many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

How wonderful is the scheme of human redemption!—how grand the whole transaction! It is made the concern of the ever-blessed and adorable Trinity! The Father, "who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us," devised the plan, by which his equal Son made a propitiation for our sins, in the sacrifice of himself; and the Holy Spirit, proceeding from both, moves upon the heart of the sinner; lets in heavenly light, and quickens the soul to repentance and faith. The redemption of Christ is thus applied to the man; and he who was dead in trespasses and sins, is made alive unto God, and receives a new nature, being conformed to the image of Christ. How ample the provision made in the gospel for this important purpose,—for this new creation. We see in it not only the Father reconciling the world to himself in Christ his Son, and the Son voluntarily giving his life to redeem; but the Holy Spirit also waiting at the heart of man, to show him the finished salvation, and to apply it, in all its

benefits, to the soul! The agency of the Spirit is essential. Without it there is no saving apprehension of the Saviour. But this agency is promised—promised to prayer. Jesus Christ appealing to our parental feelings, says, “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” Seek, then, the influence of this Divine agent. Seek with sincerity of desire. Seek with urgency and importunity, and the gift will be granted, and your salvation will be sure. “Ask,” says the Saviour, “that your joy may be full; and whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he will give it you.”

After what has been said on this all-important subject, need I caution any of my juvenile readers against a false security? There may be some of you to whom such caution is needless. There are persons of all ages who endeavour to make themselves easy on the question of peace with God, by resting on what they call *a good conscience*. They wish well to all mankind—they believe the Bible—

and try to keep the commandments—and they know that God is merciful. Not a few young people satisfy themselves with the hope, that as they have been baptized, educated by Christian friends, passed under confirmation, and are actually attending upon an evangelical ministry, they are in the right way, and must be saved at last. My dear young friends, these are delusions, the strong delusions of Satan, the enemy of your souls. Many are his devices; and these are among them. But faithfulness requires us to tell you, that resting upon these grounds is tantamount to rejecting the Saviour. You *must* be born again, and that of the Holy Spirit, or you cannot enter Heaven. Your justification in the sight of God is only by faith in the righteousness and atonement of his Son. This is the only justification which procures peace with God. It is then, as naturally as the tree produces its own fruit, that the inward principles of devotedness to God, and entire dependance upon his grace will operate to the exhibition of “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,

and temperance." Now, this state of the soul forms the right foundation of all practical obedience. Partakers of this nature, you will be found faithfully discharging the duties of your relative stations. But these important matters it was needful to explain and enforce, before we took into consideration those duties, which, to have any value, must be founded on them. I now ask your attention,

**II. To those DUTIES WHICH YOU OWE TO PARENTS AND PRINCIPALS.**

On this head we might revert, in general terms, to the duties of heads of families, as detailed in a former discourse, and observe, that the subordinate members of the household are bound to parents and masters by reciprocal duties. While it is incumbent on parents and masters to administer suitable instruction to the members of their families, it is the duty of those members readily to receive, and diligently to improve the instruction given. The duty of maintaining wholesome discipline, on the one part, ought to be met with uncomplaining submission and acquiescence, on the other. When the heads of families are careful to con-

duct them to the services of the sanctuary, and to gather them around the family-altar; such concern for their religious interests ought to be returned, on the part of each member of the household, with a cheerful compliance, indicating at once their sense of gratitude for the privilege they enjoy, and their love for the house of God and the exercises of devotion. Again, if parents and masters are bound to show the various members of their families every becoming example, and to encourage and excite them to general usefulness; it is binding on the subordinate members carefully to imitate what is good; and gladly to embrace every opportunity to give proof of their excellent training, by rendering whatever assistance they can, whether by prayer, or personal, or pecuniary effort, to the religious and benevolent institutions of the land. But we will be more particular, and take up the points specified in the text.

The FIRST class of subordinate members of a family are the CHILDREN, and to some of their duties we will now give our attention. “Honour thy father and mother,” are the

terms under which all the duties of filial piety are enjoined. Our language supplies no other word equally happy with the word "*honour*," in this place. No other is so expressive of all that is comprehended in the range of filial obligations. In commanding to *honour* father and mother, the sacred scriptures require children to cultivate all that is reverential and respectful, affectionate and kind, towards their parents, in their *hearts*, and that *at all times*; as well as to show docility, submissiveness, and deference, in their *deportment*, when *in the parental presence*. I would therefore observe,

1. *It is the duty of children to cultivate cordial reverence and affection for their parents; and to manifest these filial qualities, at all times, whether in, or out, of their sight.* The heart is the seat of the affections, and of the moral qualities, good and bad. The character, therefore, is formed upon the state of a man's heart:—"As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." It is the fountain which gives out "the issues of life," of moral life. It is the source of all moral worth, and the

contrary, in human conduct. This being the case, it is of the first importance that the heart of the child be well affected towards his parents. My young friends, whatever your domestic training may have been, we must inculcate this principle upon you. Your parents claim your cordial regards; and no peculiarity of circumstances can annihilate that claim. The duties and services you render to them ought to spring from the heart. Filial piety is a term which has reference mainly to the heart; and all attentions, however specious, which have not this origin, being insincere, are worthless.

Young man, perhaps you are, or have been, the object of much parental solicitude, much affectionate and pious culture. You are, it may be, the child of many prayers. Many hopes and fears have alternately agitated the bosoms of your fond parents. They have sedulously watched the progress of your mind, from the first dawn of reason, to your youth; and to that progress have they adjusted the moral and religious instruction which they felt it their duty to impart. What

returns are you now making to such parents ? Your privileges under their tender, yet judicious and christian training, have been great. If, as it ought to be expected, you have been all along repaying the kind assiduities and heart-felt anxieties of these your best earthly guardians, with filial reverence and love ; and if you are also proving the piety of your heart towards God, by a deportment agreeable to his word ;—then, O happy parents ! happy child ! “ The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice ; and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad ; and she that bare thee shall rejoice.”

Young woman, are you the daughter of godly parents ?—and can you trace, from your earliest recollections, their tender, their careful attention to whatever concerned your well-being, in your person, in your health, as well as in your moral and religious nurture ? Have you been growing up, before their delighted eyes, a lovely and attractive specimen of the blessing of God upon their kind efforts,—of his gracious answers to their many

tearful prayers on your behalf. If such is your happy case, I need not ask you how much you owe to parents like yours ; or how you should be affected towards them. Surely your heart tells you that their persons and characters are dear to you, in no common degree ; that your eye turns, with peculiar delight, to their countenances ; that you live in their approving smile ; that when out of their presence, you love to recall their looks, their attitudes, the very tones of their voice ; and that, as occasion occurs, you speak of them with tenderness, gratitude and respect. Parents of the description we have just supposed are eminently worthy of their children's love : and children who thus pleasingly repay their cares, "all that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed."

But if, on the contrary, any of you, whether male or female, are repaying the kindness and the christian instruction of pious parents with coldness and neglect ; if you are not cherishing that gratitude towards them which nature and religion demand of you ;

but rather returning their goodness with proud and contemptuous indifference ; then is your character unlovely in the sight of God and man ; and your condition dangerous in the extreme. You are objects of dislike with all people of correct feeling who know any thing of you ; and you are exposed to the special displeasure of the Almighty, who commanded this denunciation to be made aloud in the ears of Israel, “ Cursed is he who setteth light by his father or his mother ; and all the people shall answer, and say, Amen ! ” Can you, on hearing this, estimate the degree of guilt in which your conduct is viewed by the eye of God ?

We must also tell you, that, even in the case of parents who are themselves unenlightened, irreligious, and unkind, children are not exempted from their filial obligations. The Divine command, “ Honour thy father and thy mother,” is binding upon them as upon others. You may have had better opportunities of improvement than your parents ever enjoyed ;—your education and your attainments may have been superior to theirs : you do not, on that account, hold any dispensation

from God with respect to the honour due to them. The case, it is granted, is peculiarly trying to children who have the fear of God before them. You are not privileged with the example and instruction of godly parents; but if you neither love nor practise their wicked ways, their iniquity will be no bar to your acceptance with God. In the house of the wicked Jeroboam, there was an Abijah, "in whom there was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel." If your case presents difficulties and temptations of a peculiar kind, you are to consider them as only creating the greater necessity for watchfulness over your own spirit, your language, and your conduct: you are the more eminently called on to honour God by exemplifying the graces of supreme reverence for the Divine authority, combined with patience and self-denial; and filial affection under the irritabilities and unkindnesses of graceless parents. Children who are observed, in such circumstances, invariably seeking to cover the blemishes of the parental character with the mantle of filial respect, will powerfully recom-

mend themselves to the wise and good around them, and be approved of Him to whom they must ultimately give account.

2. It is the duty of children *to yield a ready and constant obedience to the commands and injunctions of their parents.* “Children, obey your parents in all things,” is the apostle’s admonition. This is delivered in the spirit of the fifth commandment in the Decalogue, which is also the *first* on the second table of the law: it thereby takes the lead of all our relative duties, and seems to teach us, that if we have discharged the filial duties aright, we shall be well prepared to fulfil those of every other relation in which we may afterwards stand. This filial obedience is an appointment of the Creator himself; he has indeed established it in the very feelings of our nature, that the parent has a right to command, and that it is the part of the child to obey. Hence even pagans have, in all ages and in all places, respected this law. It is essential to the interests of children themselves that this law be well maintained. While they are yet very young, they are incapable of

either judging or providing for themselves, and their obedience to the parent should be implicit. In youth, also, children are far from knowing themselves, or the world around them : they must look to the counsels and directions of their parents for what is considered right ; and obedience on their part follows of course.

Their obedience, too, is required to be *all but universal*. There is but one limitation to its universality, and it seems to be expressed by the words, “in the Lord,” which occur in the text. Children are, certainly, *not* bound, at the command of a parent, to do that which is contrary to the known law of God : the will of the Most High is undoubtedly paramount and binding upon all, whether parents or children ; but every expression of the parental will, which does not interfere with what is due to God, is binding on the child : his own will and inclination must not be set up in opposition to the will and inclination of the parent. Undutiful attempts of this kind cannot be made without endangering the peace and happiness of a family by exciting to

anarchy, and stirring up the rage of every evil passion. Remember Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phineas, who "hearkened not to the voice of their father," and who are branded as "sons of Belial, who knew not the Lord :" think also of their fate,—in one day they were slain, both of them !

The obedience of children, to be acceptable and gratifying to a parent, must not be rendered with reluctance, but with good will, promptitude, and cheerfulness. A child that does his parent's bidding grudgingly, and with a dogged humour, gives pain to his parent ; and by indulging an unamiable temper, destroys his own happiness : such conduct, indeed, is not obedience, but proves often the very worst specimen of disobedience. It is that only which comes from a sensible heart and a willing mind, which commends itself to God and man. Every service derives its character from the spirit in which it is performed : if it appear to be the result of fear or force, it is worthless ; but let it proceed from a prompt and cheerful disposition, as if hastening to prevent the expression of the parent's wish, it

has then a character and a value in it which at once adorn and sweeten it to the parent's heart. Children! I entreat you to attend much to the *manner* of your obedience : your parents judge from your manner whether your hearts are with them or no ; and O, if you knew what a pang it sends into the bosom of a fond parent, when you do his bidding with slow, sullen, unwillingness, you could not be hard-hearted enough to inflict it. This brings me to observe,

3. That it is the duty of children *to promote, by every voluntary act of tenderness and attachment in their power, the happiness and comfort of their parents.* Little children ; you who are yet quite young, and dependent on the protection and instruction of your parents, endeavour to make their attentions to you easy and pleasant to them, by your meek, cheerful, and docile behaviour. If your parents are teaching you the good ways of the Lord, how happy may you make them by attentively hearing, feelingly receiving, and carefully practising, the lessons they give you ! If they caution you against any

sinful temper, any evil companion, any unlovely habit,—O how you relieve their anxiety, and gladden their hearts, when they see you taking their warnings and counsels in good part, and availing yourselves of them by your willing compliance. And if you would cheer your parents yet more; if you would increase their gladness of heart, ask their advice, seek their instruction, and show them that you put a high value on their directions in all serious and important matters; and that you esteem them for their wisdom, as well as love them for their goodness. You that are farther advanced, and can reason and judge, let your parents have the gratification of beholding the fruit of their early toils in the sweetness of your temper, and the correctness of your conduct. Let them see the blossoms of your childhood ripening into the fruits of wisdom, truth, and uprightness; administer to them whatever comfort and assistance you can, in their times of depression and sickness. Let your conversation with them be ever seasoned with the salt of respect, gratitude, and tenderness. If fallen into want or decay, aid them

with your substance ; and, as far as your means permit, supply their necessities with assiduity and tenderness. When they are descending into the vale of life,—when those energies are spent and gone which they once exerted for you,—and that endurance of watchfulness and toil, once sustained in your behalf, is broken down,—then bear them up in the arms of filial love ; lighten by all the means in your power, the pressure of their years and their weakness ; be eyes to them in their dimness, and feet to them in their lameness. And when, at last, they come to their journey's end, and are about to bid adieu to all sublunary things, sustain and cheer their souls, by bringing to their remembrance the consolations of their holy religion ; and then, ere you are called to close their eyes in death, take their final blessing,—the blessing as of Jacob, when he blessed Joseph :—“ Thy bow shall abide in strength, and the arms of thy hands shall be made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee ; and by the Al-

mighty, who shall bless thee with the blessings of heaven above?"

Truly the rewards of filial love and obedience are many and great. How consolatory, how delightful will it be to reflect, after your honoured parents are taken from you, that you have been enabled and permitted to administer to their happiness through life; and to part with them under the cheering hope of regaining their beloved society in that better and enduring existence, where "sorrow and sighing flee away;" and where death shall be swallowed up in life!

But think of the contrary character,—think of the undutiful child, who, grown to adult years, can allow himself to forget what he owes to his parents. Think of his having risen up under the care, the patience, the toils, of a father and mother whom he grieved with the perverseness and frowardness of his earlier years; and whom he is now, by ungrateful neglect, bringing down, in their grey hairs, with sorrow to the grave;—and can you imagine any thing in the moral world more

odious, more disgusting ? Such a character is revolting to the sense of mankind in general ; it is a monster which nature disowns, and scripture denounces with abhorrence. Let the undutiful child reflect upon the universal hatred he has drawn upon himself; especially on the high displeasure with which the Father of all mankind must view him, whose appointments in the order of nature he outrages, and whose express command he tramples under foot. Let him reflect and repent ; and, if there is yet opportunity, hasten to make what reparation he may to his ill-treated, dejected, broken-hearted parents ! Let him humble himself before his *earthly* and his *heavenly* Father, till the favour of each being restored, he may yet know the blessing of a peaceful conscience, and the happiness of living under the smile of a forgiving God.

The SECOND class of subordinate members of a family are the SERVANTS. Under this term we include, as we have already observed, all that useful order of persons who are engaged, by wages or salary, to do service for others. The order of society, ordained by

Providence, requires that while the few must command, the many must obey : while some are masters, others must be servants. But to all and each,—to every grade among men, our universal religion lays down the law. In the passage of holy writ, on which we have founded our present discourse, the class of servants are specifically recognised, admonished, and encouraged : here they find at once their charge and their charter. The duties they owe to their masters and employers, with the spirit in which those duties are to be discharged, are strongly inculcated upon them ; while they are taught their privileges as Christians, and encouraged to look for their final reward of grace from the Lord of all, with whom there is no respect of persons.

Our apostle, in the passage referred to, addresses himself to servants as *Christians* ; and it is to such as make this profession I would direct the few admonitions I am about to give. Servants, you have much of the peace, the interests, the general happiness of society in your hands ;—the places you hold

are not simply those of labour, they are places of management, and, therefore, of trust ; and not unfrequently, of skilful and delicate execution. Your masters and employers do, of course, depend much for their daily comfort, and even for their general prosperity, on your character and service : let me entreat you then, as far as in you lies, to maintain the peace, harmony, and happiness of the community in which you live. With a view to your doing so, I would in particular advise you—

1. *To cultivate a cheerful contentment with your lot.* God has placed you in it ; the grade you belong to, the place you fill, are yours by providential arrangements. It is God's prerogative "to make rich and to make poor ; he bringeth down and lifteth up." "God is the judge ; he putteth down one, and setteth up another." Your place in society is no degradation ; it is what *must* and what *ought* to be filled by some. The character, too, of persons of your class, is generally made a matter of careful inquiry and selection. In your condition of life are found many, who are the excellent in the earth, and precious in

the sight of God. You have opportunities in your situation of proving highly serviceable to the community at large, and of rendering essential aid to numerous operations of both secular and religious importance. You are also in circumstances peculiarly favourable for exemplifying the graces of humility, meekness, and self-denial; than which there are few graces more beautifully expressive of the christian character. Envy not, then, any of those whom you see in stations above you: we can tell you that what you are sometimes tempted to sigh for, as a lot more easy and happy than your own, is often a state of things so full of anxious cares, agitating fears, and costly sacrifices, as to render it much more bitter than the hardest servitude you endure. Did you but know what many in higher stations suffer from the perplexities, the mortifications, and mental distractions, to which they are exposed, you would thank God that you have been spared from such evils, by the humble lot assigned you. Gaiety and splendour do not indicate real enjoyment; neither is he the greatest gainer who has the greatest pos-

sessions ; but the Apostle's maxim is ever true, “ Godliness with contentment is great gain.”

2. I would advise you to *engage yourselves with families and employers of a virtuous, and, if possible, of a religious character*; this, if you are Christians indeed, or desirous of improving yourselves in the best things, you will make a point of no small importance. If you fear God you will seek to live with those that fear him ; you will reckon it a privilege worth every careful search, and even many sacrifices, to obtain. If you know your Bible, you must be aware that it tells you that “ the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked ; but he blesseth the habitation of the just.” In which of these would you prefer to live ? When you read in the word of God this fearful imprecation, “ O Lord, pour out thy fury upon the families that call not upon thy name,” would you knowingly and willingly join a household of such a description ? or would you not rather be happy to find out the habitations of the righteous, where the same word assures you, “ the voice of rejoicing and salvation is heard.”

Forget not, I pray you, that your success in life depends on your character for innocence and virtue ; which will, in a great measure, be estimated according to the reputation of the individuals with whom you have lived. Let not, therefore, the offer of higher wages, or easier employment, tempt you to enter the service of persons of loose and irreligious character ; their contact is perilous to your principles and your good name : you may lose in their connexion infinitely more, in a moral view, than you can ever gain by pecuniary emoluments, however great ;—you may, indeed, after every care, be deceived : you may happen to fall, contrary to your expectation, into situations, and among persons, dangerous to your best interests ;—in that case it is your duty to quit them without delay. If you belong to Christ, you will hear and obey his voice : “Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul : be not cut off in her iniquity.” And now, after these duties, which you more particularly owe to yourselves, I would remind you—

3. That you owe to masters and employers

*a diligent, prompt, and faithful discharge of the various duties of your respective situations.* "Servants," says the apostle, "be obedient to them who are your masters according to the flesh." This admonition you cannot neglect without incurring the guilt of gross injustice. You have entered into a compact with your masters or mistresses, by which, on your part, you are bound to obey all their lawful commands, as, on their part, they are bound to render you the covenanted hire. Duly impressed with this conviction, you will do no service in a careless and slovenly manner. You will feel, indeed, that such habits, in the discharge of your duties, are not more unjust to them than discreditable and injurious to yourselves. Nor let your diligence and promptitude be stimulated merely by the presence and eye of your employers; despise the meanness, as well as abhor the unfaithfulness of the negligence and the omissions, in their absence, which you would not be guilty of in their presence. They that would secure the praise of good and faithful servants will be conscientious in this respect.

They will remember the admonition, to fulfil their obligations “not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.” Actuated by conscientious principles, you will identify the interests of those whom you serve with your own : you will not allow yourselves to waste either their property or their time. The apostle, writing to Titus, bids him “exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again ; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” It is a sin against common honesty to pilfer from your masters ; and as much of their property must necessarily be entrusted to you, so much more heinous and aggravated is the sin of every fraud you commit against them. There are servants, I know, who justify themselves in appropriating or disposing of what they call trifling articles in their master’s house ; but while they do this without the knowledge or permission of their masters, they are guilty of fraudulent practices, and a

breach of the divine command. A conscientious and Christian servant will regard the spirit of the prohibition, and abhor the very appearance of such a sin. He will study in this, as in all other things, to serve his master with singleness of heart, and with clean hands. He will also consider it inconsistent with a character for good fidelity to indulge habits of slothfulness and loitering in his master's employment. He will reckon his time to be his master's purchased property, and that he is not at liberty to dispose of it in amusement or business simply his own, without permission, far less to squander it away in lazy slumber, or idle talk with vain companions. But it is not enough, my young friends, that you avoid evil, and give no cause for censure ; you must aim higher than all this. Let your praise be that of good, faithful, and profitable servants. Strive, in the fear of God, and as the servants of Christ, to recommend yourselves and your religion to the esteem and the attachment of those in whose service you are engaged. Limit not your labours in their behalf to the mere routine of servile duties.

Let them see that you understand, and care for, their interests ; that you can rejoice with them when they rejoice, and weep with them when they weep, and that you are ready, at any time, to sacrifice your own ease, and your own gratification, to promote their advantage. Sympathise with them in their personal and family afflictions ; pray for them ; and do all in your power to soothe and relieve. In this department of duty how eminent is the example of Eliezer, Abraham's servant. Hear how he prayed for his master :—“ O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham ! ” And what a lovely picture of artless, disinterested sympathy, is presented to us in the narrative of the little Israelitish maid, the captive slave of Naaman, the leper. Forgetting her own hard lot, in being carried away from her native land, and all her dearest connexions, to serve as a slave in a Syrian family, she thought only of her master's affliction, and “ she said to her mistress, would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover

him of his leprosy." Go then, and in the character of Christian servants, do ye likewise.

4. I would observe that, *a good and faithful servant will in his language and manners, honour and respect his master.* "Honour to whom honour is due" is the universal maxim ; and surely no servant who has sense enough to know his place, will be disrespectful to his master, or to any of his superiors in rank. It is the apostle Paul's special injunction, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour." "Servants be obedient to your masters with fear and trembling." The apostle Peter gives you the same lesson. "Servants," says he, "be subject to your masters with all fear;" and he adds, "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the foward." To observe this injunction aright, you will be careful to harbour nothing in your minds derogatory to the honour and good name of your masters. You will not give a willing ear to any evil report about them, but rather hold yourselves bound to defend their reputation against every attack, with all the zeal

that truth and propriety will permit; and you will order your own conversation and conduct respecting them, both in and out of their families, agreeably to the rules of good society, and of the religion you profess. Without doubt, you will find in the best of masters and employers many blemishes and faults too common to our fallen nature; but Christianity and good sense alike forbid you to expose them to others. Be more alive to their excellences than to their defects. Charity becomes us all. In whatever scale of society we rank; whatever place we occupy, we shall ever find it needful to claim and to exercise the grace of charity; and all of us, whether masters or servants, ought habitually to remember the beautiful admonition of our apostle, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Finally, my friends, you cannot be too often, or too strongly impressed with this all-important feeling, that your best services to your fellow men are to be prompted chiefly by the consideration of what you owe to the Lord your God; and be subordinate to, and regulated by, his declared will. This the apostle repeats and inculcates, even at the hazard of tautology. You are to be obedient, *as unto Christ*; as “*the servants of Christ, doing the will of God; doing service, as to the Lord;*” and in another place, “*Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men.*” He would in this manner teach you, that in whatever relation you stand to men—whatever covenanted services you owe to them—your great principle of action must be the acknowledgment of Christ as your **MASTER IN CHIEF.** His servants you are, in the entireness of your nature; and the services you owe to your masters in the flesh, must be discharged in conformity to, and as parts of what you owe to, Him. You see, then, how much your religion is connected with the duties of your station. It enters into and

sanctifies them all. You are glorifying your Master in heaven, when you are honourably and uprightly serving your masters here. Thinking first of what you owe to Him, you cannot forget, or carelessly perform, your duties to them. It is thus you will maintain consistency of character, and "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Thus will you grow in grace, and prove instrumental, in bearing before the world a pleasing testimony in favour of your holy religion. And for your encouragement, remember you will not be forgotten in the great day of account; "for whatever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

We come now to consider—

### III. THE DUTIES CHILDREN AND SERVANTS OWE TO EACH OTHER.

On the duties of brothers and sisters one to another, and of servants to their fellow-servants we shall be brief; neither is it needful to draw out our remarks on such topics to any great length.

1. *Brothers and sisters should cultivate*

*mutual love and attachment, whether at home or abroad—whether together or apart.* My young friends, you are the children of the same parents; you have been nursed in the same arms; dandled on the same knees; and fed at the same table. Your first protectors, friends, and instructors, are the same. You are taught, in your infancy, to turn the eye of confidence to the same countenance, and to cling with filial fondness to the same bosom; and can you but love one another? What so natural, what so likely, as for streams of affection, converging to a common centre, to meet and blend together? It were strange and unnatural if they did not. Your earliest attachments, then, and the friendships of your childhood were formed within the domestic circle. Cherish this pure,—this natural alliance;—an alliance hallowed by so many endearing recollections, and sanctioned by the commendations of holy scripture. While yet under the parental roof, the cultivation of brotherly and sisterly love is essential to the peace and harmony of the family—to the happiness, indeed, of every individual in it, from the parent,

who loves you all, to the lowest menial of the household. “Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”

But look into a family where unbrotherly tempers prevail,—what an unlovely picture it presents ! How humiliating to behold human beings, connected by the closest ties of nature, at utter variance in heart and behaviour with each other ! What disorder ! What ebullitions of anger ! What feuds ! What noisy passionate criminations one against the other ! How much more like a den of wild beasts is that house, than the residence of rational, civilized man ! “O my soul, come not thou into their secret ; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united !”

But this brotherly and sisterly love is not to be limited to the period of your fellowship under the paternal roof. There it is first kindled ; there it is to be fed and increased in strength ; but it is not to be quenched at the door of your common home. It is a sacred flame which ought never to die out. When Providence calls you to separate one from the other, carry your fraternal affections with you,

and wear them continually. However distant your lot may be cast, brother from brother, let each one, as he thinks of his brother, say and feel in his heart,—

“ Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,  
My heart untravell'd fondly turns to thee;  
Still to my brother turns, with ceaseless pain,  
And drags, at each remove, a length'ning chain.”

“ Let brotherly love continue.” It is too precious a quality of the heart to be carelessly lost. It ought to be too deeply impressed to be ever effaced by any influence from the world. So generally, indeed, is it honoured among us for sincerity, fervency, and durability, as to be made the standard of reference for almost every other kindly attachment. “ To love as a brother,” is understood, to love with a warm and lasting affection. When the apostle Peter would commend the cultivation of christian love, he finds no stronger expression than this:—“ Finally, be all of one mind; *love as brethren.*” Paul, in the same manner, admonishes us to be kindly affectioned one to another, with “ *brotherly love.*” But pas-

sages to this effect are numerous in your Bible. The claims of nature, and the claims of religion, you see, combine in behalf of the brotherly affections. Neglect them not, we pray you, under any circumstances of external condition. Should you, in the course of Providence be raised above your brothers or sisters in affluence or station, do not forget, do not neglect them. Show them no haughtiness nor reserve. This would be not only to sting them with sharp and cruel pain, but to degrade yourselves. Let them be made kindly welcome with a brother's frankness, to a reasonable share in the blessings of your richer lot. Should you allow a cold selfishness to pervade your hearts, and to freeze up the genial current of your earlier affections, hear what Christianity would say of you,—“Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” This brings me to observe,—

2. That brothers and sisters should cultivate *tender sympathy and kind forbearance*, one towards another. The benevolent Author

of our existence has made sympathy a law of our nature. He has thus provided a relief for us under the various evils which beset us in life; for he that shares the sorrows of another, thereby diminishes them. This law, indeed, does not operate equally in all. Some are sooner, and more deeply moved by it than others; but when a fellow-creature is bowed down with sorrow, or languishing with sickness, our first emotion is almost invariably that of sympathy. If then, you are conscious of such a feeling, (and who is not ?) even in the case of strangers, how much more intensely ought you to feel it, and act upon it, if a brother or sister be in affliction ? A brother, or sister, is another self. Accordingly, in the language of Scripture, when fraternal kindredship is claimed with another, the expression commonly is, "Behold we are thy bone and thy flesh!" In any case then, of a brother's or a sister's sorrow, sickness, or want, "hide not thyself from thy own flesh." "Can the sufferings of one so closely connected be either loathsome or indifferent to you ? Would you not rather hasten to soothe the troubled heart,

and relieve the sick frame of so near a relative ? But to give sympathy its full play in your heart, and to indulge in ministrations of brotherly kindness, may cost you many sacrifices, and much self-denial. This cost must be sustained, and gladly sustained, if you would act the part of a “brother born for adversity,”—if you would obey the dictates of simple, undistorted nature, and honour the precepts of your benevolent religion.

Nor is this enough : sympathy and soothing in the sorrow and sickness of a brother, are prompted by nature : something more is required of the Christian. To brotherly kindness must be added charity. You must bear with the faults and infirmities of a brother. It may be you see more of these infirmities, and see them more frequently than others, out of your circle, are aware of; but to resent them with anger, or expose them to the world, would be inhuman ;—to bear with them, to hide, or extenuate them as far as possible, is Christian. Do you not wish to be so dealt with in your own case ? Deal so with your brother. “ Brethren, if a man be overtaken

in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." Should the faults of a brother or sister be personal offences against yourselves, I would only refer you to the answer Peter had from Christ, when he asked, " How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him: till seven times ? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven." Go ye, and obey your Lord. I would now only add,

3. That brothers and sisters should endeavour to *promote each other's spiritual benefit.* This is to be done by a mutual exhibition of the various virtues and graces of the christian character, by encouraging each other to every christian duty ; by maintaining a judicious, yet kind, check on each other's indiscretions ; by mutual admonition ; and by prayer with and for each other. That each and all of these, are duties devolving on you who are brothers and sisters, both in the flesh and in the gospel of Christ, will not be denied; in neglecting them, much guilt and grief will

be incurred ; in fulfilling them, there will be peace, union, love, and harmony, in the family ; you will have the enjoyment of a good conscience, and the love of God, in your personal experience ; and, as you abound in them, there will be the practical shining before the world of “ whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, and whatsoever things are of good report.”

It remains that I say something on the duties of servants to their fellow-servants : I would admonish them—

1. *To cherish a friendly and benevolent temper towards each other.* Some among you may be very industrious, very sagacious, very clever, and therefore very useful to your masters and employers ; you may also be strict professors of evangelical religion ; but you are cold and sullen ; or you are irritable, impatient, and easily put out of temper, both with masters and fellow-servants. This one bad quality, more than any other, disturbs domestic quiet; wounds the spirits of those who

serve with you ; gives to your manners the character of briars and thorns, and renders your company oppressive and irksome. Would you willingly indulge a quality of such tendencies as these ? Would you be the bane of the general peace and comfort around you ? Consider what you lose, and what you incur, by this infirmity of temper : you lose the esteem, the good-will, the ready co-operation which your fellow-servants would otherwise accord you ; for who would press the cold ice to his bosom, or thrust his hand into the raging fire, if he could avoid it ? And what do you incur ?—the hatred and contempt of men, the displeasure of God, and a self-upbraiding conscience. Suppress, then, by every prudent, every religious consideration, the bad passions to which your nature is liable : do not seek to palliate their offensiveness, or to hide their deformity from yourselves ; look at them in the odious light in which you would view them in another, and learn yourselves to hate them. Watch and pray against them. Put on meekness, and “ be clothed with humility ;” for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to

the humble." To acquire the character of a meek and humble Christian, is worth all the conflict, all the crucifying, all the self-denial to which it may call you. Its rewards are incalculable, whether for the life that now is, or for that which is to come. Do you want a model to study it by?—take that of your Saviour, "who was meek and lowly in spirit;" who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously."

But more than this, it becomes you to adorn your profession by aiming to be *useful* to your fellow-servants: let your behaviour towards them be characterised by friendliness, benevolence, and uniform willingness to aid and oblige them. In many, if not in most respects, you have, as fellow-servants, a community of interests: there should, therefore, be a daily commerce between you of acts of kindness and mutual aid. You will thus facilitate to each other the performance of your respective duties, and experience the benefit

of habitual compliance with the apostle's admonition, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." That you may, however, be really useful to each other, I would observe—

2. That fellow-servants owe to each *other the admonitions and warnings of mutual friends.* It may be your lot to serve in an establishment with others, who are ignorant, irregular, and irreligious: this is no desirable position; but if Providence has brought you into it, you ought to view yourselves as so placed for the discharge of appropriate duties. You cannot, as Christians, be indifferent to the moral condition of such fellow-servants: you will consider them as having fallen in your way for wise and good purposes, which you are bound to promote. To this end you will see it your duty, not only to practise much forbearance, to avoid all needless peculiarities on your part, and to accommodate yourselves to many of their weaknesses; but watch over them as brothers and sisters: your duty to your Master in heaven, as well as to

them, requires you to restrain them from sin by faithful admonition, kind remonstrance, gentle rebuke. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." You may often be tempted to fear that your best endeavours in this way will all prove unavailing. You may even, in such cases, meet with rude insulting returns for your kindest interferences: you must not for that abandon your christian object,—your labour of love. Think of the great sacrifices that are often made in war to obtain an important point from the enemy: though repeatedly driven from it, force after force is brought up, and the attacks renewed until it is gained: to win the heart of your fellow-servant for Christ, is a much greater object. Persevere, and your example of patience, mildness, and self-denial, will, with the blessing of God, so powerfully recommend your reproofs and your warnings, that they shall prove at last victorious. And what a reward is this! What an honour to be made instrumental in

“converting a sinner from the error of his way, in saving a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins !”

3. Finally, it becomes fellow-servants *to remember each other at a throne of grace.* If you really love the souls of your fellow-servants, and desire their salvation, this will be your constant practice: all your other acts of kindness and christian regard for them, must be sanctified by prayer. To render your efforts available for their good, you must have help from above; and to draw it thence, frequent and fervent supplication must be made at the throne of grace;—it is there you are to ask and obtain for them, through the one atonement of our great High Priest above, the forgiveness of their sins and follies; it is there you are to plead for grace to restrain them from repeating their evil practices, and to lead them to repentance and to faith in the Redeemer. In the day that any trouble overtakes them; or when visited with sickness, or any calamity that lays them aside; then, besides affording them all the alleviations which your sympathy may suggest, go, spread their

case before God in prayer, and implore his pity, his healing power, his renewing grace. This is the Christian's part in whatever rank of life he moves; and this is your part in the circumstances we have supposed. To this effect is the admonition of the apostle James: "Confess your faults one to another; and pray one for another that ye may be healed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Thus far, my young friends, have I sought to direct your attention to the various duties devolving upon you, as children and servants. I would now, in conclusion, pray you to accompany me through a short review of the whole: and in making that review you will, doubtless, acknowledge—

1. *The ample provision which Christianity makes for the happiness of domestic and social life.* The avowed principles of our holy religion need but to be fairly understood to gain universal admiration for their benevolence and charity. We may safely assert, that in proportion as we exemplify these principles, we approach the perfection

of our nature, we create general and individual happiness, and we glorify God, who has published by his gospel, “on earth, peace, goodwill towards men.” Our Christianity has two opposite aspects, suited to the two opposite tendencies in the moral world. To whatever is evil, and adverse to the entire welfare of man, it turns a frowning aspect; to whatever is really good—whatever promotes his best interests for time, or for eternity—it has a smiling, an approving, an encouraging aspect. It rebukes, and would banish from the heart of man, every selfish, every unsocial feeling. It condemns, not only all deeds of dishonesty and rapacity, but the slightest desire to possess ourselves of another’s good. It denounces envy as an “earthly, sensual, devilish” passion,—the source of “strife, confusion, and every evil work.” It admits not even of discontent; and it classes “the unthankful and covetous” with those who are exclusive “lovers of themselves;” who are blasphemers, disobedient to parents, without natural affection,” and under the dominion of every unholy and anti-social principle; com-

manding us “from such to turn away.” But whatever bears on human improvement; whatever mitigates the ills to which our nature is liable; whatever tends to make man better and happier, is taught and enjoined upon us by the religion of Christ. By his own example, and by the whole tenour of his teaching, Jesus Christ encouraged the exercise of the social affections;—his law forbids every unkind emotion; and its language to them who bear his name is this:—“ I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you. Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven, is perfect.” But in reviewing our subject we have reason—

2. *To lament before God the neglect, or imperfect discharge, of our relative duties, with which we are chargeable.* Yes, let each one bring himself before the bar of conscience, and put the question, “How have I discharged, or how am I discharging my relative duties ?” and if it be answered honestly; —answered as in the sight and hearing of

God, a confession I fear must, in most, if not in all cases, be made of fearful neglect, or sad deficiency. Is it not so? Who among you, parents or children, masters or servants, can answer to your consciences and to the Searcher of hearts,—“Thank God, all these things I have done, I am doing?” If such an answer cannot be made: if, on the contrary, your neglect, or defective obedience, stare you in the face, then what remains but to humble yourselves before God, and with contrition of heart to seek forgiveness for the past, and wisdom and diligence and zeal, and every needful grace, for the time to come! Brethren, our term of life is short, and we know not what a day may bring forth;—but this we know, that our family connexions will soon be broken up. Death is rapidly removing one and another from us. The last opportunity of redeeming time may hurry by us, and leave us to lament without hope. Let us then make it our immediate concern to study the duties of our respective stations, to seek light and energy from above, and proceed with heart-felt desire for the glory of God and the good of souls, to

the diligent and faithful discharge of every “work of faith, and labour of love,” given us to do. “Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.”

*3. Let a review of our subject stimulate the young to an increased seriousness and carefulness in fulfilling their filial obligations.* My young friends, I have been briefly, and but imperfectly, reminding you of the duties belonging to your standing in your respective families. Have I succeeded in making an impression? Has the Holy Spirit caused his own word to tell upon your consciences; and have you felt condemned by recollections of past undutifulness,—of acts of disobedience offensive to God, and painful to the hearts of your parents? Resist not, I pray you, these convictions; suppress not these upbraiding; let them awaken contrition of heart—let them impel you to confession and prayer before God, and detain you there until, renewed by his grace, you are enabled to bring forth the lovelier fruit of cordial obedience to his will. Cultivate at all times a deep respect for the duties of your station.

Let your filial obligations be ever considered as having the most solemn claims upon your regard; think of them as the best means afforded you, in your present stage of life, of giving proof of your piety, and of your devotedness to the service of God. Make the God of your fathers *your* God, by the early dedication of yourselves to his glory. Engage yourselves to Him as your covenant God, in Christ Jesus, his Son; through whom alone you and your services are accepted of Him. Then will your steps be ordered of God;—you will rise into life with still increasing wisdom, usefulness, and true enjoyment; while in your happy experience will be fulfilled the promise of the Lord, “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” Once more, in reviewing our subject we see—

4. That it supplies to servants, and all in subordinate stations, the most forcible considerations for the performance of their various duties, strictly on christian principles. To those of this class I would say,

you perceive, my friends, that the word of God plainly and fully recognizes your station in society, and lays down the rule for your conduct, while it manifests towards your interests the most benevolent regards. In the word of God you meet with special sympathy; it demands of your masters and employers, on your behalf, an upright dealing, and a treatment, not merely humane, but kind and benevolent. It requires them to render you "that which is just and equal;" and stops not there: it tells the master, "thou shalt not rule over thy hired servant with rigour, but shalt fear thy God;" "forbearing threatening." But while it thus provides for your temporal interests, it insists on your faithfully discharging every duty to your masters, and that for the glory of Christ; and points you to your final reward from him with whom there is no respect of persons. Remember then that you are bound by the law of the gospel, and by that law you must be judged. If found unfaithful in the service of a fellow-creature, you will be condemned as unfaithful to your master in heaven; as having despised his law and

dishonoured his name. The servant, as well as the master, that doeth wrong, “shall receive according to the wrong which he hath done.” But if, in the spirit of the gospel which you profess, you strive “to adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour, in all things,” acquitting yourselves of your duties “heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men, ye shall receive of the Lord the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ.” Be assured that in the day of retribution you will not be overlooked. The distinctions of mightiness and meanness among men, are not acknowledged of God. The great will not be accepted for his greatness, nor will the poor be neglected because of his obscurity. Let this motive stimulate you to all christian obedience; let the remembrance of it console you under every trial you may be called to endure: and for your farther encouragement I recommend to you, and leave with you the admonition of the apostle Peter: “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward: for this is thank-worthy, if a man

for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully : for what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently ? but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable to God. For even hereunto were ye called ; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps : who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth : who when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not ; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously." This is *your* pattern and *mine* ; let us copy it, and we shall do well.

## LECTURE V.

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### DUTIES OF MEMBERS OF CHURCHES.

"We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you ; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake ; and be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man ; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men." 1 Thess. v. 12—15.

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THE object which brought the Son of God into our apostate world was to redeem and gather out of it a people for himself. That people formed part of the common mass ; were implicated in the common guilt ; and, by nature, the children of wrath, even as others. But they were given him of the Father ; and he came, and sought, and saved

them. They are therefore a “peculiar people,” distinguished as to their spirit and character from the men of the world, being formed anew “to shew forth the praises of him who brought them out of darkness into his marvellous light.” The Holy Spirit having wrought a change on their moral nature, they differ, not only from others, but from their former selves. Before, they were ignorant of God and godliness ; now, they acquaint themselves with God, and delight to do his will.—Before, they imbibed the opinions and maxims of the world, and acted upon them ; now, they perceive the course of this world to be altogether wrong, and they renounce it.—Before, their pursuits, their hopes, their fears, were all confined within the narrow compass of mortality ; now, their views and prospects stretch far beyond and above the gloomy precincts of death, to a home, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, “reserved in heaven for them.” In thus far differing from their former selves, they necessarily differ from the rest of the world. They bear the name, and acknowledge

the authority of a Master whom the world receives not, and to whose paramount claims it is opposed. He has prescribed them laws and regulations exclusively his own, to which they hold themselves bound to conform. To promote his glory and the spiritual interests of their fellow-men must be the constant aim of their lives, and that at all risks from an unbelieving world. Such is the position in which they stand; a position creating a community of interests and mutual sympathies, which draw them out of the world, and unite them into one consenting band. Their principles do not admit of amalgamation with the world; neither can those principles be brought into operation, so as to produce those legitimate and intended results by *individual* Christians, loosely and promiscuously scattered abroad. They must combine—they must fraternize, and form into a body rightly organized, to attain the great and good object for which they exist. But to form into this sacred combination they are not more obviously drawn by the fact of their being made to differ from the rest of the world, than they

are bound so to do by the express will of Him whose name they bear. He has enjoined them, in various forms of utterance, and in numerous passages of his word, to renounce the maxims and practices of a sinful world, and, withdrawing from them, to stand out as a distinct family for himself: "Come out from among them, and be separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Now, the people of God thus gathered together, and making a covenant with him, to choose him for their portion, to profess his name, and to glorify him by devout worship and holy obedience, constitute his CHURCH. It is an assembly only of believers in, and worshippers of, God, according to his own rule and will. A christian church, constructed on scriptural principles, consists of none else. Its Divine Head and Founder recognizes no other character as belonging to that body; and has fenced it round with prohibitory laws against the intrusion of strangers. "Unto the wicked God saith,

What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" And by his apostle he charges us on this matter, " Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? and what communion hath light with darkness ? and what concord hath Christ with Belial ? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel ?" The constituents of a church, then, whether officers or ordinary members, must consist of believers, and of them only. The end and object of a christian combination can be directly effected only by Christians. This is self-evident on the principle of analogy. There are, we know, many exclusive associations among men. Such, for instance, as the political, the scientific, the commercial. To promote the specific objects of these separate bodies, it is indispensable that the respective members be possessed of appropriate qualifications. Some knowledge of politics, and a taste for dealing with public matters are needful to qualify for membership in one of these ; some acquaintance with the

learned sciences, some attainments in philosophical pursuits, are required to be admitted to another; and without some skill in the laws and rules and interests of trade, a man is not prepared to associate with the third. Just so it is with the church of Christ. It is an association for the attainment of spiritual objects; and the members of such association must be distinguished by a character of spirituality. Whenever we read of them in the New Testament, whether alluded to or addressed, it is always in the form of some descriptive phrase, or some appellative, importing a believing, a renewed, a sanctified character. Of the primitive churches the members are, in one place, designated, "the multitude of them who *believed*;" in another, "the beloved of God, called to be saints;" and in another, they are thus addressed, "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

That bad characters were sometimes found in the primitive churches is not denied. Paul complains of false brethren who had been

brought unawares into the church at Jerusalem ; but the term *unawares* proves that their entrance was an intrusion. They had practised on the charity of the believing brethren by whom they had been received, under the impression that they were what they professed to be, sincere believers. When, however, their real characters were detected, they were no longer retained in the church. Its discipline required that such intruders should be dismissed. The apostle's command was decisive on this point. Writing to the church at Corinth, and alluding to some unworthy character admitted there, "Purge out," he says, "the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened ;" and then, without a figure, he adds, "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." The purity of the christian church abhors ungodliness and worldly lusts ; and he who has not learnt to deny them is no acknowledged member of that holy institution.

That of such only as are sincere believers the church of Christ is intended to consist, will be the more obvious, the more we con-

sider the ends for which it is established in the world. The mutual cherishing of holy principle ; mutual encouragement in the ways of godliness ; mutual edification and strengthening in the common faith, to fortify against a persecuting world ; are the immediate objects of this sacred union : and all these are made to contribute to the ultimate and grand end in view—the glory of the Divine Head of the church, in the inclusion of the whole family of man within her holy and happy pale. Every individual entering the visible church with right principles glorifies God. He thus avows himself a witness to the grace of God in his own heart, and gives practical evidence of it in his obedience to the express will of his Redeemer. His example stimulates others to join the good cause ; these again, by their influence, win upon others, until “the little one become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation.” Under the superintendence of her great and glorious Head, the church is advancing in strength and grandeur ; and even now she is in the midst of a dark and alienated world, “looking forth as the morning,

fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Her internal purity, her universal benevolence, are her strength and beauty; and the subjugation of the world under the sway of Christ, and through his own might, is the triumph she is achieving, and which she is destined to complete. For a character and for an instrumentality such as we have described, the church, it is clear, must consist of those only who believe in, and love, the Saviour. Such only can truly profit by, and enjoy her privileges; by such only can her great objects be carried on and accomplished.

Having said thus much of the objects intended by a christian church, and of the character of its genuine members, I proceed to the more immediate subject of the present Lecture—"The Duties incumbent on the Members of Churches."

We are, in our moral constitution, accountable agents,—to God, in the relation of creatures to their Creator; and to one another, as members of the same community. This is true of mankind, as a general doctrine; but

we perceive it more distinctly and impressively, when we look at any particular relation in which we may individually stand. Whatever that relation be, we find ourselves connected with others; and brought, in consequence, under its own class of obligations. A man, for instance, entering on the profession of a soldier, assumes, in addition to his common responsibilities, those under which his new engagement binds him professionally to his Sovereign, his country, and his comrades in arms. In like manner, they who enter themselves members of a christian church, whilst they acknowledge all other obligations, take voluntarily upon them the peculiar duties and responsibilities of this sacred fellowship. They are duties *voluntarily* assumed; but, when assumed, imperatively binding. They have to do with the hearts and consciences of men; and it is of high importance that they be rightly understood, in order to be faithfully discharged. That portion of the apostle's address to the church at Thessalonica which we have read as a text, taken in the spirit, as well as in the letter of it, will suggest

the points to which we mean to solicit your attention.

The duties, then, which the members of a christian church voluntarily take upon themselves are such as they owe—

I. To CHRIST, THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

II. To THE PASTOR WHO LABOURS AMONG THEM, AND IS OVER THEM IN THE LORD.

III. To EACH OTHER.

IV. To THE WORLD AROUND THEM.

The church is Christ's. It is founded on his authority; is called by his name; and exists for his glory. In becoming members therefore of a christian church you owe to its Divine Head,

1. *A profession of faith in his person and character, and adherence to his cause.* When God at first founded his church upon earth, he made a covenant with it, by which it became his peculiar heritage. The covenant was made with Abraham, as its representative, when the Lord engaged to be his God, and the God of his seed after him. The tenor of this covenant may be conceived as

occurring in the words which Moses received on the mount of God to deliver to the children of Israel: “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation;”—and as he afterwards rehearsed it before all the chosen people: “The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb;”—“for thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God. The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are on the face of the earth.” From these and many other passages that might be quoted, it is evident that the church of God consists of those whom he has himself chosen, and who, on *their* part, declare him to be the object of their choice. That church, from the first to the last, is composed of the same kind and class of people, though under different dispensations. From the day in which a particular family was separated from the world, and its members honoured with the exclusive appellation of the *sons*,—the

*children*,—the *people*, of God, the visible church of Christ took its rise, and has existed until now; and as the institutions of God are made in absolute wisdom, the principle of admission into his church remains the same. Every candidate for that sacred society is required to enter into covenant with God, and not only to “believe in the heart,” but “to confess with the mouth.” The mode of doing this adopted by particular sections of the church may differ; but the confession, or *profession*, of which we speak is universally supposed to be made. In this manner did Philip receive the eunuch: “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized; and he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son God.” Agreeably to this the apostle Paul enjoins with sufficient distinctness the duty of making this profession: “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

Let me now entreat you who profess Christianity, but who are not yet candidates for

church-membership, to consider this question in its proper light. You are either what you profess to be, truly and sincerely believers in Christ, or you are not. If you are not, O think of your dangerous position,—convinced, but not converted ;—enlightened, but not renewed ;—holding the truth in theory, but refusing its claims upon your heart and life. To what a fearful consummation are you exposed. “That servant which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes ;” “and whosoever,” says the Saviour, “shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven.” But if you are genuine believers, born anew, hating sin and loving righteousness, why do ye yet hold out against the command of Christ. If he is the object of your heart’s love ; if ye hold him infinitely precious, as the alone procurer of your pardon and acceptance with God, and that at the cost of his own blood, why do you not, in surrendering yourselves to him, give yourselves to his people, “according to his will.” Do you not know,

that in commanding you to come out from the world, he commands you also to enter his service, to join his sacred band, and to make common cause with them by a public profession of his name before the world. The act of this union is indeed voluntary, else there would be no obedience of love. Human authority cannot lawfully control you here. No magistrate, no secular government, has a right to interfere with your conduct in a question like this. But the law of love to the Redeemer *ought* to constrain you; and, if it operate to the full, it *will* constrain you, and even make you willing in the day of his power, not only to cast in your own lot amongst the christian brotherhood, but to encourage and invite others to the same decision. It will prompt you to look round for such as you can charitably esteem the lovers of Christ, and kindly to urge them, saying, "Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." Brethren, let your love to the Redeemer, let your adherence to his cause, be thus actively proved. Then will your

fruit abound to his glory; and you will yourselves be greatly enriched, and be the means of enriching others, in the blessings of the gospel, and in the privileges of the kingdom of Christ. You will be among the happiest and most honoured of the servants of your Lord; and happy, would I say, happy is that church, where the members connected with it are thus actuated by the spirit of the primitive disciples. Their works of faith and labours of love are not forgotten in heaven. The Lord looks down on that portion of his heritage with complacency, and says, "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." Again, the members of a christian church owe to their great and glorious Head,

2. *Undivided allegiance and submission,*

*as their Sovereign and Lawgiver in spiritual things.* "One is your Master, even Christ," is the doctrine taught by Christ himself: it is by his Holy Spirit you are called into church membership; it is of him you have made profession; to him you have bowed the knee; with him you have made a covenant. In the capacity, then, of members of his church, you acknowledge no authority, submit to no law, but his. If any man, or any body of men, attempt to bind the conscience, or give the law to the church of Christ, they infringe upon his sole prerogative; their presumption is condemned in the word of God; Christ himself declares its utter futility,—"In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." In this declaration we have the Founder's own view of all interference with the laws of his church. He claims the entire government of an institution which, but for his own authority, could have no existence, which is organized by his direct prescription, and to which he has given doctrines, precepts, and ordinances, in no way subject to human sanction or modification.

In the eye, therefore, of every member of that church, his right to prescribe and to rule is supreme,—without a rival or any one to divide the claim. Assertion of supremacy from any other quarter is treason; and a grievous disloyalty it is to submit to such assertion. If we are his people within the pale of his church, we are bound to maintain his exclusive authority here. We must insist that the church, which is *his* kingdom, not being of this world, is not subject to it; that “the government is upon his shoulder” alone, and his glory in this matter he will not give to another. To be true to him we must withstand, we must repudiate, every false pretender, every imposition, every doctrine of man at variance with the law and the testimony of his own word. It is our privilege, as Christians, to rejoice in knowing that “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he raised him from the dead, set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to

come ; and put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." But in order to maintain, with a correct and enlightened judgment, the exclusive right of the Redeemer to supremacy in his church, we owe him,

3. *A careful and diligent study of his mind and will, as recorded in his own word, respecting the constitution and government of his church.* Jesus Christ, comparing his church to a flock, of which he is the chief Shepherd, says,—“ When the shepherd putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him ; for they know his voice, and a stranger will they not follow; for they know not the voice of strangers.” How is the Church to distinguish the voice of her Divine Head and Legislator from that of a stranger? He has given her his statute-book, wherein the laws and ordinances for her observance, are to be found. Every member, to know his Lord's will, must, therefore, make this book his daily, his close, his serious study. He is not un-

frequently tempted by the sophistry of some stranger or another, to forget the voice of heavenly truth. Many voices are to be heard at this day, professing to be spiritual guides, which only lead astray. Such deception, indeed, if total, will be only in the case of those who either neglect the infallible oracles of truth, or who have a corrupt leaning to the errors by which they are destroyed. But even the genuine members of Christ's church are often perplexed and made to stumble in the mists and fogs of vain systems that pander to the self-esteem and worldly wisdom so natural to the human mind. There is need, therefore, of constant attention to the admonition of our Lord, "Search the scriptures, for they are they which testify of me." They alone contain the statutes, the doctrines, and the precepts by which his church is to be regulated, in all matters of faith and obedience; and show how each member is to be instructed in his duties and his privileges, and in the way of peace, for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. We have no other authentic documents to study. "To the law and to

the testimony" alone, as the Spirit of Christ has delivered them, are we to shape our opinions, and from them to draw our conclusions. To them let us apply, with all abandonment of preconceived notions of our own, of all trust in our own wisdom; but with all reverence for Divine authority, and a simple, prayerful, and child-like reliance on the teaching of the Holy Spirit: our eyes will then be enlightened to see the truth, and our hearts drawn to love and obey it. The same Spirit that instructs us will fortify us against the influence of false interpreters, against any rivalry with Christ for our allegiance, as members of his church. In duly studying the sacred records, we learn, that He only is "to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him." We are there fully assured of his undivided authority: "Wherefore God," says the apostle, "hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue

should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Such are the lessons we learn from a careful study of his word; and with these views, and the sentiments arising from them impressed upon our minds, we may trust that we shall cherish in our hearts a supreme regard to the mind and will of the church's rightful Lord, and faithfully abide by whatever he has instituted for our observance. This leads me to remark, that we owe to Christ, as Head of his church,

4. *A lively and wakeful regard to the impartial and efficient administration of all his acknowledged institutions.* The church of Christ, being a divinely organized body, is necessarily furnished with laws and regulations perfectly adapted to her nature. From these she derives her peace, her harmony, her happiness within; by these her strength and beauty are preserved without; and in these her greatness and her glory appear to every eye. The Psalmist, contemplating the church as the creation of the power, the wisdom, and the grace of her exalted Head, sings of her in his figurative way: "Jerusalem is builded as

a city that is compact together ; for there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David : " and in another place, " Walk about Zion, and go round about her ; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces ; that ye may tell it to the generations following." But to insure the firm and healthy standing of any institution, its laws and regulations must be steadily, uniformly, and purely administered : to neglect this is to bring it into disorder, and endanger its usefulness. If the acknowledged laws of the church be suffered to fall into disuse, corruption is the inevitable consequence. If scriptural discipline be relaxed through selfishness, favouritism, or carnal indolence, the vigour and purity of the church will be sacrificed ; and declension and backsliding among the members will be the certain but melancholy results. Brethren, I must regret that this consideration does not, in all places, meet with due regard : a conscientious self-denial, and a right preference of Christ's command to the fond feelings of friendship or kindredship, or any other object, must be con-

tinually exercised in every church which would inherit the blessing of her great and glorious Head. Not "Thus we think," or "Thus we do," but "Thus saith the Lord," must be the only rule in church-government,—the common, the uncontroverted rule, for office-bearers and private members alike. This is a vital topic, and well deserving of a much ampler notice than we can now afford it. Permit me only to observe farther, that the honour of Christ and his religion, the increase and stability of the church, the spiritual improvement of individual members, demand a strict and impartial discharge of the laws which Christ has given for the direction of his church. These great and good objects must be dear to the heart of every true Christian: he will feel it his honour, as well as his duty and interest, to strive by his own example to promote them; stimulated by the recollection that "Christ so loved the church that he gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or

wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

"We proceed now to commend to your attention the duties which church members owe—

**II. TO THEIR PASTOR, WHO LABOURS  
AMONG THEM, AND IS OVER THEM IN THE  
LORD.**

This is confessedly a delicate subject for a christian minister to deal with, and seldom touched on, except at ordination services; but if it becomes us to keep back nothing that is profitable unto you, but to declare *all* the counsel of God, then are we not at liberty to withhold from you this part of ministerial admonition—we are bound to teach the mind of Christ on this, as on every other topic. The apostle, the propriety of whose example will not be disputed, makes frequent reference to it; his language in the text is at once urgent and explicit: "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." Now, whatever esteem,

and deference, and love, the apostle may claim of the people for their pastors, it is evident, from the terms in which he speaks of them, that nothing is farther from his thoughts than to plead any thing like stately repose, or sinecure ease for them: while they are *over* the people in the Lord, they are also *labourers* among them. If he asks the people to esteem them, it is "for their work's sake." There is not a name given them in scripture which does not involve the idea of labour, care, or grave responsibility. As *Bishops*, *Overseers*, *Watchmen*, over the church, they are required to be vigilant,—intensely watchful for the order and safety of their charge. As *Pastors*, they are to feed the flock of Christ with knowledge and understanding. As *Ministers* and *Teachers*, they are to be as servants to the church for Jesus' sake; "to preach the word; to be instant in season and out of season, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom." And as *Workmen* and *Labourers*, they are to plant, they are to water, they are to labour in God's husbandry; "they are "to study to show themselves ap-

proved unto God, as workmen that need not be ashamed." But to attempt only an outline of the varied work of the christian Pastor, would be to travel out of our present walk much too far: I am not now called to do it; I wish only to show by what I am saying, that the Pastor lays no claim to exemption from labour; that he holds no charter of inactivity or irresponsible ease. No, brethren, the christian minister, whose character and habits are formed on the platform of New-Testament rule, is no luxurious idler: his labours are many and great. The careful, the devout preparation of the study,—the public services of the sanctuary,—the pastoral visits from house to house,—the attendance on the sick, the afflicted, and the dying, of his flock, and the many anxious duties of governing in church affairs; of reproofing, rebuking, exhorting, with all long-suffering and doctrine; with numerous other nameless cares and anxieties attaching to his office, might well make the stoutest heart sink under fear and trembling; and excite the exclamation, "Who is sufficient for these things!" It is not, how-

ever, of pastoral duties, but those of church-members to their pastor, of which I have now to speak.

In the passage immediately preceding our text, the apostle had been, with great paternal tenderness, exhorting the church-members at Thessalonica, to the cultivation of christian watchfulness, and the communication of mutual comfort and edification : and then, as if bethinking himself of the way most likely to ensure the healthy practice of all the reciprocal duties, he commends to their special consideration, the claims of their minister to their respectful and affectionate regard. Observe the tenderness and urgency with which he advocates those claims. We may gather, I think, from the words of the text, and other forms of allusion to it in various parts of his writings, that he felt strongly on this subject. The character of the christian ministry was to him a matter peculiarly dear. In his own person he was enabled to maintain its high-toned spirituality, benevolence, and charity, with singular effect ; and, knowing how essential the reputation of its purity was to the interests

of the great cause for which he lived and laboured, he repeatedly and solemnly presses on ministers themselves an unrelaxed attention to the integrity of their own characters; and on the churches in general, as in the words before us, a strong and lively kindness of feeling towards them, "for their work's sake." Permit me then, my brethren, in farther dealing with this apostolic admonition, to draw from it the following inferences. Church members owe to their pastor—

1. *A becoming deference to his authority in the church.*
2. *A tender regard to his reputation.*
3. *A willing and ready attention to his instructions.*
4. *A uniform and steady attendance on his ministry.*
5. *A liberal provision for his support.*

We infer then from our text, that members of a christian church owe to their pastor,

1. *A becoming deference to his authority in the church.* Our apostle, in his Epistle to the believing Hebrews, admonishes them expressly to this effect: "Obey them that

have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God." This admonition plainly supposes that the church is founded upon the principle of authority and subordination: of a party ruling and a party submitting to rule. Such a state of things, indeed, is essential to the order and successful operation of every institution among men. While some direct, others are directed;—some lead, others follow: so, in the church, the office of ruling and guiding belongs to the pastor, while the people are required and expected to follow and obey. But the pastor's authority admits of qualifications: it is not supreme; there is nothing given to it in scripture to excite the alarm of the most sensitive of our church members. It is true he is there alluded to in terms which seem to invest him with a right of superintendence and rule; but it is no less evident that he holds it not from any personal claim, but only as a trust committed to him, and that too in a limited degree. The pastorate is an appointment of the great Head of the church, who, as chief Shepherd of the universal flock, his own property,

appoints pastors, as his under shepherds, to tend whatever sections of the fold he pleases to assign them. His servants they are, in common with every individual of their charge; from him they take their instructions; by his laws they rule, treating the flock according to his direction, and leading them to his pastures, and to his only; and are accountable to him for the manner and spirit in which they fulfil their office. At the same time, while we are ready to admit, and even careful to show, that the pastor stands in a capacity subordinate and responsible to the divine Head of the church, we must not deny to his office that authority with which it is really invested by him. In virtue of his office, it is his not only to teach, to counsel, and to warn; but to administer the laws of Christ to the church, whether in the ordinary cases of church government, or in those of punitive discipline. It is his carefully to observe the conduct and conversation of individual members; to encourage and stimulate the timid and inactive; to direct the ignorant and them that are out of the way; to reprove the foward and unruly;

and, in fine, as the apostle has it, “to watch for souls, as they that must give account.” Now, in none of these departments can he act with effect, unless he be supported with some degree of veneration for his person and character, on the part of his people;—unless there be evinced a becoming deference to his counsels, and a respectful submission to his decisions, when consonant to the mind and will of Christ.

My dear brethren, bear with me while I press this obligation upon you, as a matter of solemn importance. Forget not, that though you are voluntary agents in coming under any church order or discipline, yet you are bound by the law of Christ to promote to your utmost the successful working of his institutions. Much of this, wherever you are connected, depends on your cheerful co-operation with the pastor of your own choice: you have voluntarily made him your spiritual guide; refuse not to follow him, so far as he follows Christ. You have invited him to take the oversight of you in holy things; receive his counsels, submit to his reproofs, obey his

injunctions, with all becoming docility and meekness of temper: so doing, you will sustain his spirit in times of trial and difficulty; you will lighten his cares; you will sweeten his works of faith and labours of love; you will cheer him on in his course of usefulness, in calling sinners to repentance, in building up believers in their most holy faith, and in every lawful exertion for the enlargement of Christ's kingdom. But members of churches owe to their pastor,

2. *A tender regard to his reputation.* "A good name is better than precious ointment; and rather to be chosen than great riches." Thus saith the wise king of Israel; and the sentiment is borne out by common experience. By a good name here I do not mean that noisy popularity, which, so far from being a *good*, is often the greatest *snare* into which a minister of the gospel can fall. The adulatory breath of a superficial and capricious multitude is rather to be deprecated than desired. It is a species of fame that may be gained without any real worth, and lost without any real fault. By some preachers, I

confess, it has been courted; but when gained, what have been the results? With not a few it has been followed with total shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; in the case of others, we have witnessed a lamentable decay of personal piety, and a culpable conformity with a vain and giddy world. No, the good name which is desirable for every christian, and especially for every christian minister, is that which stands on an enlightened esteem for his moral and religious consistency. A pastor truly devoted to his work, and mainly anxious to glorify his Divine Master, and to save souls, deserves this good name among you, and your tender protection of it against all violation. Such a pastor preaches not himself to gain for his talents or ministerial ability your admiration and flattery. This would be to make you idolaters, and himself an idol. The faithful pastor abhors a spirit so treasonable, and a practice so certainly fatal to the spiritual interests of his charge. But he is tenderly alive to the value of a good report, both among yourselves, and among them that are without. He cannot but feel that, as a man, as a chris-

tian, as a christian minister, it is essential to his self-enjoyment, and to his official influence, that he be well reported of in every quarter. His good name is to him a more precious possession than any pecuniary emolument; it should, therefore, find its guardian in every member of his church. His character, indeed, is not simply his own; it is also the property of the church with which he is identified. In this view of it, you will see, not only the cruelty and injustice, but the self-dishonouring quality of any practice that aims at the degradation of your pastor. In *his* esteem *you* are esteemed; if *he* be disgraced, *you* sink in reputation with him. Your mutual interests are concerned here. Cherish a high and affectionate esteem for your pastor; let him be the centre of your common attraction; let his good name be dear to your hearts; unite in its defence; there will then be "peace within the walls, and prosperity within the palaces of your Zion," and her "towers and her bulwarks" will be held in honour.

But ministers, it will be said, are men of like passions with others; and it is well

known they have their faults. True, ministers have their faults ; and far am I from insinuating that they are more excusable, or less censurable than those of other men. Nor would I seek to fence round their persons with a mysterious kind of sacredness forbidding the eye of observation, or the approach of freedom. By no means ;—their characters should be well ascertained, and their conduct watched, lest they should betray any inconsistency which may convict them of unfitness for their office. But we plead for them, that such of their faults and blemishes as are inseparable from humanity be not uncharitably blazoned abroad, and their guilt unkindly magnified. We plead that their person and their movements be not placed under a jealous surveillance, and their words and actions subjected to a prying inquisitorial scrutiny, for exposure to others within, or without, the pale of the church. We plead that you would deal tenderly with their infirmities ; that you would readily attribute the best motives to their counsels and their doings ; and to give even their most questionable points the benefit of

the best construction they will bear. This is reasonable—this is what charity, what christian profession demands of you. Without, however, supposing any thing so unnatural as a church member harbouring a malicious spirit against the pastor of his own choice, there are not unfrequently found those, who, through a habit of mere gossipping, and inadvertance to consequences, indulge, from time to time, in remarks respecting their minister injurious to his good name. I would beseech all such to check that grievous propensity. It is the sin of “privily slandering your neighbour,” of “backbiting with the tongue,” so much condemned in the word of God; and, as it may be fairly presumed, greatly aggravated, when turned against an unoffending minister of the gospel. Think of this, my brethren, and refrain from a sin infinitely more hurtful to yourselves, than to him against whom it is committed. I intreat you, as often as you feel this evil propensity come upon you, instantly to suppress it, and pray with David, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”

3. Members of a church owe to their pastor *a willing and ready attention to his instructions.* We use the term, "instructions," in its generic sense, as including the various species of preaching the word, reproofing, admonishing, declaring the whole counsel of God, and keeping back nothing that is profitable. Now all these duties are essentially of the nature of *communications.* The pastor's office is to *distribute* good things; he is to "feed the church of God," and "to give to each a portion of meat in due season." To be successful then in the objects he has in view, his flock must *receive* what he presses upon their acceptance. If satisfied that what he offers is good,—that it is brought from the common store of his Master's provisions, and that it is calculated to promote their spiritual health, they are not at liberty to reject it. His faithfulness to their interests has a claim upon their grateful attention; and a due regard to their own profiting requires them to "receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save their souls." It is peculiarly unfavourable to the comfort and success of a minister

when his hearers are more disposed to become *critics* than *scholars*; if, instead of sitting as *learners*, they listen as *judges* to decide on what they hear, according to their own pre-conceptions of truth and error. People of this description will very freely impugn what they call their minister's unfortunate bias to this or that notion which they do not approve; and they are generally his hottest opponents who are least qualified to give an opinion. Some shade of difference in his view from theirs, they will magnify into vast importance, and condemn it accordingly. He is either too *practical* or too *doctrinal* in his preaching; either too *high* or too *low* in his sentiments, for them. Men of such minds, allowing these censorious reflections to become habitual, can no longer hear without prejudice; they are no longer instructed, for their modesty has given way to self-sufficiency, and their docility to dogmatism. Brethren, this propensity is the bane of all spiritual edification, and, according to its extent, of a church's prosperity. It is not, however, meant, by any thing here said, that you are to surrender your judgment in

religious matters, with unquestioning submission, to the opinions of any man. No, you are to take heed *what* you hear, as well as *how* you hear. The people of Berea are commended for the caution with which they heard the preaching of Paul and Silas at the first. "These," it is said, "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." So do ye; search the scriptures daily with devotional study; and unless your pastor swerve from these records, "receive the word" from him "with all readiness of mind." And let me add, you are bound in this way to receive of him not merely that which is strictly didactic, or admonitory, or consolatory, but also whatever is of a warning, remonstrating, or reproving character. It is by acquitting himself faithfully in all these departments that he makes "full proof of his ministry," and entitles himself most to your grateful and affectionate attachment. Cultivate, I pray you, a humble and teachable spirit, and bless God for a pastor that does

not slightly heal the wounds that sin has made, nor cry, “ peace, peace, when there is no peace.” Beware of being found among them who “ consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness.” Remember how the Spirit of God has described them :—“ This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord ; which say to the seers, See not ; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things ; speak unto us smooth things ; prophesy deceits.” “ Consider this ; and the Lord give you understanding in all things.”

4. Members of a church owe to their pastor *a steady and uniform attendance on his ministry.* Of all the means of grace, the preaching of the everlasting gospel is the chief and most prominent. To prove this, it is not needful to use much reasoning ; a few words, with one or two references, will suffice. Our Lord dignifies the office of a preacher of the gospel by speaking of it as his own great commission from the Father : “ The Spirit of the

Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." And after his resurrection, it is the main subject of his instructions to his disciples,—“ Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” It cannot therefore be a doubt that it is the solemn, the indispensable duty of every man who has it in his power, to attend the preaching of the gospel. You who have enrolled yourselves in church fellowship with the people of God, acknowledge all this. You acknowledge that the gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;” and that in order to believe, you must hear it preached. It follows, then, that your attendance on the ministry you have chosen is a matter of conscience. To a regular observance of this duty you are solemnly bound, being pledged, by your union with the church, to all its ordinances. We have said, you owe this to your pastor; but that, true as it is, is after all only a secondary consideration;—you owe it to your own consciences—to your spiritual safety—to the command of your Lord. It is an obligation of which you

cannot be negligent without incurring much guilt. The apostle is urgent upon this head, when he enjoins us to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;" and presses his injunctions with peculiar force upon our attention, by denouncing against the wilful violation of such a duty the fearful indignation of God, whose salvation it insultingly sets at nought. Unless, therefore, you have grave and substantial reasons for absence, see that you occupy your places in the sanctuary whenever it is open for the worship of God. If you truly love God,—if you desire to honour the Saviour,—if you would be exemplary to your fellow-worshippers, and if you would encourage the heart and hold up the hands of your minister, let your uniform and punctual attendance in the house of God testify it to all. Cherish in your hearts the emotion of the Psalmist, and let each return of the Lord's day be greeted with the exclamation, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the

courts of the Lord ; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God."

But there are church members fully alive to the importance of public worship, who yet see no evil in frequent absence from the ministry of their own pastor, to worship at another place. They would not, on any account, be absent from public service at the stated hours. They are still, they allege, in their duty, when listening to another voice than that of their chosen teacher. I would address a brother of this description in the language of the prophet, and would say, "Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned: Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?" Think at least of your minister's claim upon your regular attendance at your own place. He has perhaps a special message to deliver to you from the Lord, at the very time you have chosen to be absent. Perhaps some peculiarity in your case has engaged his attention; he sympathises with you, it may be, under some difficulty or trial that has befallen you; he makes it the subject of his study and his prayer; he prepares to meet

you in the sanctuary with appropriate consolation and advice;—and then he has the mortification to find that your sympathies have not been with him; that you are gone after another, and left all his service and his prayer for *you* to return into his own bosom. Is this well done, my brother? Is this the conduct your pastor expected of you, when, in the name of the church, he gave you the right hand of fellowship? Ponder, I pray you, on your way, and amend it, that you may yet be ranked among “those that be planted in the house of the Lord, and who shall flourish in the courts of our God.”

5. Finally, the members of a church owe to their pastor *a liberal provision for his support.* On this topic I shall be brief; and were it not that the pecuniary support of the ministry is a duty which the scriptures themselves have made binding on the conscience, I know not that I should speak upon it at all. But what says the New Testament? “Do ye not know that they who minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they who wait at the altar are partakers with

the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel." The churches of Christ are therefore required by his own appointment to support their ministers. The same claims of religion upon the support of the people were made under the Mosaic dispensation; and not being a rite or ceremony which has suffered abolition, but a principle of common justice, it holds good also under the gospel. We see that the Saviour himself acted upon this principle in his own ministry. He chose to forego all personal property, and contented himself with the daily contributions of them that heard him. Upon the same principle he sent forth his disciples upon a short missionary excursion, when he thus charged them: "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey; neither two coats, nor shoes, nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat." We know, indeed, that the apostle Paul did labour, working with his own hands to minister to his wants; but this was only occasional, and at some particular places. It is sufficiently plain

that contributions were generally made for his support. "In Thessalonica," says he, "ye Philippians sent once and again unto my necessity; not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." And this principle of ministerial support commends itself, by its very reasonableness, to every right-minded thinker. If a man, constrained by the love of Christ and of souls, withdraws from every secular pursuit, and excludes himself from every prospect of emolument from professions or from trade, and devotes his time and attention solely to the christian ministry, what more reasonable than his claims for support on those who enjoy the benefit of his ministrations? "If he sows unto them spiritual things, is it a great thing if he shall reap their carnal things?" So asks the apostle; and he means, of course, to say, that in this interchange, whatever the amount of the carnal things on one side, they are nothing in value to the benefit imparted on the other. There are church members, however, who set much value on their carnal things. As it regards their minister, they can hardly

bring themselves to look upon him as a creditor to whom they owe a just debt; and hence they feel no shame in reducing their contributions for their minister to the lowest figure allowed them. To him who taxes his utmost energies, mental and physical, who shuts himself up for many hours together at hard study, who traverses the streets and the roads, from day to day, to pay his pastoral visits to the sick and the dying, and spends many days and nights in anxious care about the people of his charge, to him they will be content to assign somewhat less than they give for the mere muscle and sinew labour of a common mechanic. Brethren, this, so far from being generous, is not just. Church members who judge righteously and agreeably to scripture on this question, will devise liberal things. They will be guided by considerations arising from the claims of the minister on his own account, from the credit of religion in connexion with the church to which they belong, and from the ability which God may have given them, to testify their esteem for the friends of Christ. Christians of a li-

beral mind will be awake to all these considerations. They will study not so much a proportion to the contributions of others, as to show themselves approved unto God, by freely giving, as they have freely received. The faithful pastor of a church, where members of this description abound, will feel his heart drawn out to them in love. He will “be willing to impart to them not the gospel of God only, but also his own soul, because they are dear unto him.” He will bless God on their account; he will commend them daily to his grace, and be ready to respond to their liberality, as the apostle did to the generous Philippians, “I have all and abound, having received the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.” I pass on now to notice,

**III. THE DUTY OF CHURCH-MEMBERS TO EACH OTHER.**

The apostle in our text reminds the church to which he is writing of that peaceable,

orderly, and fraternal character which they should ever study to maintain as Christ's peculiar people. This he does in general yet forcible terms; his object being to inculcate upon them a supreme, a never-watchful regard to the glory of God their Saviour, by an exhibition of all moral worth and loveliness. To effect a purpose so desirable, he intimates that there are mutual obligations for united Christians to discharge. We will consider some of them. Church members, then, in order to promote the character which Christ the Head of the church requires her to sustain, owe to each other the cultivation of,

1. *Brotherly love.* This is the principle which drew them together at first. When brought to know and love Christ, they could no longer love a world lying in wickedness; but recognising a similitude in one another, a coalition naturally followed. If the world loves its own, so does the church of Christ: "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." The hearts of all believers meet in God, as in one common centre; they cannot, therefore, but love one

another. There is a mutual recognition of the Divine image wherever it meets its like, and mutual attraction is instantly felt. But this affection, existing as it does, throughout the universal church, is fed and invigorated by a closer union. The streams of catholic love gather activity and intensesness when made to converge into the focus of a separate and smaller community. We are commanded to love as brethren all that love the Saviour, and that not indifferently, but fervently; "not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth;"—yet it is obviously impossible for us to render to those who are at a distance from us, and whose persons we neither see nor know, the same tokens of christian regard which we may, and ought to, show to those who are near. It is to those certainly of our own locality that our first, our closest, our warmest attentions and sympathies must be evinced. With them we are required to "*walk* in love." This grace must mingle and predominate in all the intercourse of fellow-members with each other. In this capacity they form a more compact body. They are all as brothers

and sisters under the same roof; under the same oversight, and faring alike. What then so essential to their well-being as brotherly love? Peace and harmony, with every other element of church prosperity, are sustained upon this holy principle. The stones of the spiritual building are bound together by the cement of love. It is the sentient principle throughout the whole body, by which one member feels for another. The exercise of this brotherly love secures against any schism in the body; all the members care the one for the other; "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." When a church is living in the healthy exercise of the christian graces, a sympathetic recognition will prevail among the members. There will be no haughty distance of the rich from the poor; no cold indifference on the part of the influential towards the less prominent members. No, but "if there be but a thorn in the foot," as Archbishop Leighton expresses it, "the back boweth, the head stoops down, the eyes look, the hands reach to it, and



endeavour its help and ease: in a word, all the members partake of the good and evil, one of another." And well does this kind, this pervading, sympathy become the members of Christ's mystical body. In his parting address to his disciples he presses the cultivation of mutual love with special earnestness upon them: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Again, members of a church owe to each other,

2. *Patient forbearance.* Human nature, in its best style has still its imperfections, its roughness, which tell of "the rock whence it was hewn, and of the hole of the pit whence it was digged." We expect not to meet with an immaculate character, even among Christians. Though they have a perfect pattern before them from which to copy, yet they reach not to perfection, While in the body, they are still copyists. However much the man may be renewed in his nature,—however great the change that is wrought upon him,

(and assuredly the change is great) the Christian has still to acknowledge with the apostle, “ Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect ; but I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” This being the case, we are, by our common condition, strongly called to the exercise of patience and forbearance. Every Christian is bound, by the consideration of his own imperfection, to bear with that of his brother ; and when his principles are in lively operation, he will do more,—he will practise the apostolic injunction, “ In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves ;”—“ in honour preferring one another.” The members of a church are under special obligations to cultivate this patient, this lowly grace. The honour and recommendation of their religion demand it of them. We not unfrequently find the men of the world exemplify the social affections in a very pleasing and attractive manner. There are not wanting among them many unquestionable specimens of the amiable and forbearing temper, which gives an agree-

able charm to our intercourse with them. But shall a favourable peculiarity of education, or of constitution alone, produce such specimens, and the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus fall short of its efficiency ? No, a cloud of witnesses in favour of our Christianity answer this. It not only gives to whatever it finds of virtuous, laudable, or lovely, in the natural man a purer and more genial soil to grow up into greater strength, beauty, and fruitfulness ; but it exerts a converting power on the harsh, the sour, or the bitter, in our fallen nature, and softens and sweetens the whole, so that the character becomes, at once, a trophy and an ornament of the truth. Whatever evil habits may have formerly prevailed, however proud or irritable the previous elements of our constitution, all are sweetly overcome by the Spirit of Christ. Members of a christian church ! the spirit of patient forbearance must dwell with you, if any where on earth. The very name you bear carries with it a sort of guarantee, that, if driven from every other society, with *you* it shall find a home. The example and precept of your

Divine Lord urge upon you the cultivation of this spirit. He went about the sympathising friend of every human being, the very personification of benevolence, and the perfect pattern of every lovely grace of heart and life. Of his soft and gentle nature the prophet no less truly than beautifully exclaimed, "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench." His own example, as being the highest possible, he proposes to your imitation. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." To the same effect are the admonitions of his apostles: "I beseech you," says Paul to the Ephesian church, "that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." Among those who are united in church-fellowship there will be shades of difference. The brothers and sisters of the same parents are never wholly alike, though they have all the family likeness. Some are stronger,—some weaker in the faith,—and what does the

apostle teach? "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Some may have made greater attainments in the knowledge of Divine things than others. The apostle warns us against valuing ourselves too highly upon our knowledge, and recommends a charitable and forbearing manner towards those who are less enlightened. "Knowledge," saith he, "puffeth up, but charity edifieth." Again, you will find some of your fellow-members entertaining opinions not in unison with your own; or betraying, at times, certain constitutional defects and infirmities of temper, contrasting unfavourably with the better features of their character; yet, if you are satisfied of their personal piety, be not hasty to censure, as though you had no infirmity of your own to lament. And, as it regards opinions, to think of securing brotherly union by insisting on uniformity in all things is a mistake. Allow to your fellow-christians the purity of their motives; and beware of sinning more than they do who differ from you, by visiting what you call their errors with a harshness of judg-

ment unbecoming the gospel. " Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ."

3. Members of a church owe to each other *mutual watchfulness, warning, and reproof*. This duty devolves not solely on the pastor; he is appointed, indeed, by way of eminence, to " watch for souls, as one who must give account;" but that special charge leaves not the individual members free from caring for each other: the common interest requires it. A christian church is a community distinct from the world: its laws and ordinances, its manners and customs, its duties and dangers are all peculiar to itself;—the world is inimical to it, and vigilance on the part of every member is needful to guard against intrusion or aggression. Each member owes to his fellow-members what timely warning he can give against snares that may be laid by an enemy, and a friendly watchfulness over any tendency he may discover in his

brother to tamper with evil. This brotherly inspection the apostle enjoins, as necessary to the peace and purity of the church: "Looking diligently," he says, "lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." It is hardly needful to say, that this *diligent looking* is not that of the prying and intruding eye of a harsh inquisitor, or a tale-bearing spy upon a neighbour's liberty: what the apostle means, and what we, after his example, would inculcate, is a careful notice of whatever presents itself to observation, as dangerous to, or inconsistent with, the purity and integrity of the christian character. It is the watchfulness of those who, feeling for the well-being of the church, as well as for individual safety, see it right to warn their brethren against a threatening evil, or to counsel a return to christian rectitude in the case of those who may have wandered from it. On the one hand, watchfulness must proceed from brotherly tenderness, and warning be given with all affection and gentleness; and, on the other, a service so performed should be readily

and gratefully accepted: it looks not well if, on either side, the right principle be not found. Let him who watches, warns, or reproves, see that he break not the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; and let the conscious wanderer remember that his spiritual state is pretty accurately tested by the manner in which he bears a brother's warning or reproof. He that fears to sin will say, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."

Watching, without warning, or, if the case require it, reproof, is of no practical utility. The legitimate use of watchfulness among church members is to warn, that sin may be prevented; and that of reproof is to recover the transgressor after it is committed. With these motives, and these only, are warnings and reproofs the duties of Christians to each other: they are recommended by the apostle for their wholesome uses; they are to be exercised as a discipline, at once preventive and restorative. Warning and reproof may be wanted in the vineyard of God, to prevent the

springing up of any root of bitterness which might infect and wither the neighbouring plants; or to recover, by a searching and stimulating process, the ravages that may have been already made. It was a command given under the old dispensation, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." With the same wise and benevolent view, the members of a christian church are required to "warn the unruly," that the peace of the church may be preserved; and "if a brother trespass, to rebuke him, that he may repent."

Brethren, we grant that this is no easy, no pleasant duty;—we are apt to allege many reasons to excuse ourselves from engaging in it; but it is an appointment of the infinitely wise and gracious Head of the church, and cannot be neglected without sin. It is, however, carefully to be remembered, that the spirit of wisdom and of love, as well as of faithfulness, is essential to the right discharge of this duty. The brother that is overtaken in a fault, is to be restored by the spiritual, *in*

*the spirit of meekness*; and that under the humbling consideration that they are themselves liable to the same temptation. Let such a spirit actuate you when you warn and reprove, and you will seldom fail to gain your brother. In fine, when you would check a brother in the career of his folly, when you would rebuke him for disorderly conduct, see that you violate not the law of love. “Put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering,” accompanying the whole with prayer for the aids and the blessing of the Holy Spirit: you will then have the high gratification of seeing the simple turn at your reproof, and even the hard and proud heart softened and subdued before the gentleness of that wisdom which cometh from above. Once more, the members of a christian church owe to each other,

4. *Ready and hearty forgiveness of offences, on expression of repentance.* If the church is to enjoy peace, this grace must prevail. A Christian, if peace be dear to his heart, will, in the first place, be careful not to disturb the peace by *giving offence*; and in

the next place, he will not readily *take* offence. Exhorted as he is to “live peaceably with *all* men, as much as in him lieth,” he will feel it more especially binding on him to cultivate it with his fellow-christians. He will not be easily offended: he will be easily reconciled. A disposition to forgiveness, planted in the heart by divine grace, is one of the brightest ornaments of the christian character: it is a principle which Christianity alone has the glory of inculcating and establishing among our fallen race. Neither polite nor savage paganism ever held it as a virtue, but rather stigmatized it as a meanness, and worshipped revenge. But such is the purifying and elevating spirit of our holy religion, that it teaches us to act upon the principle of the adorable Divinity himself. The apostle proposes it for our adoption, when he says, “Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another; even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you.” Can any motive be equal to this? Can any consideration address itself to our desire of moral greatness so powerfully as the example of God? Can any

thing appeal with such thrilling effect to our hearts as God's forgiveness of us,—and his forgiveness of us for Christ's sake? O think of the infinite obligations you are under to the love of Christ; think of the ten thousand talents forgiven you, and then, if you refuse to forgive your fellow-servant his hundred pence, the spirit of Christ is not in you. Would you, for all the offences that a brother could commit against you, forfeit your own forgiveness and your interest in Christ?—and yet he tells you, “If ye do not forgive, neither will your Father, who is in heaven, forgive your trespasses.” This is a strong appeal to your self-love; but to a self-love which ought to operate: it combines, at the same time, with other considerations, the feelings of a repentant brother, the peace of the church with which you are both identified, and the honour and glory of the common name by which you are called.

Besides, the Lord and Master of us all has laid down the rule; he has explicitly declared his will on the case; it runs thus: “Take heed to yourselves; if thy brother trespass

against thee, rebuke him ; and if he repent, forgive him : and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." Repentance, undoubtedly, on the part of the offender, must be expressed and evinced ; because your forgiveness must include, not the suppression of resentment only, but the restoration of your offending brother to the place of esteem and affection he formerly occupied in your heart. If, however, you possess the humility of conscious dependants on the mercy of God yourselves, you will not be rigid in demanding evidence of your brother's repentance ;—you will not stand out till he debase himself to your gratification ; for then you *could not* forgive—you will have had your revenge. No, you will open every facility to repentance ; you will encourage its first appearance ; and in the spirit of the prodigal's father, while the penitent is yet a great way off, you will run and embrace, and forgive him. Thus ready and cordial will be your forgiveness ; and, believe me, the forgiveness of the offended

derives all its worth, all its power, in the view of the repentant offender, from the spirit and manner in which it is granted. The hand frankly and cheerfully extended, is grasped with grateful emotion; it is the warm and prompt restoration of your returning brother that subdues and melts his heart; it deepens his contrition, and unites him closer to you than before. Such, then, is the rule of the church of Christ; and if duly carried out in practice, such will be the happy results. We come now to speak of the duties which the members of a christian church owe—

#### IV. TO THE WORLD AROUND THEM.

The apostle, in our text, recommends to members of the church the exercise of patience, forbearance, and benevolence, not only among themselves, but towards all the world. “Be patient towards all men; render not evil for evil to any man, but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men.” All this is in beautiful accordance with the spirit of him who “came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” The world is an ob-

ject of commiseration in the view of Christ ; it must be so also in that of his people. The world, indeed, is an enemy to his church ; but his church must not be an enemy to the world. Her members, collectively and individually, are bound by the character they assume, by the purposes for which they are united, and by the express command of her Lord, to consult the true interests of the world. In her collective capacity she is required to put forth every possible effort for the benefit of mankind, by sending out messengers to every accessible corner of the earth, to proclaim the only name given under heaven by which men can be saved ; by diffusing copies of the oracles of God, and tracts founded upon them, in every direction ; and by erecting edifices for public worship, and schools for religious instruction, wherever they are found wanting. But in their individual capacity, the members of a christian church owe to the world a never-failing attention to whatever is calculated to recommend the religion of Christ to its admiration and acceptance. Numerous are the ways by which they may glorify God, and

serve their generation. In seeking this object, then, we would observe, that members of a christian church owe to the world, among other things,

1. *A carefully-sustained exhibition of personal piety.* You have separated yourselves from the world to band with others of your own way : it is, therefore, but natural to suppose, that the eyes of the world will be drawn after you. They have heard the complaints you have made, and the distinctions you have claimed, and they look to see how they are sustained. They are apt to ask, “ Whence this disrelish of our society ?—Why this discontent with your former customs and companions ?—What do ye more than others ? ” From such inspection,—from such demands you cannot escape. “ A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.” You are, therefore, committed to the exhibition of greater and better things than the world affords. For the world’s sake, and for your own sake, you have new and important ends to fulfil, in professing the religion of Christ and allying yourselves with his people. Yes, when our Lord

told his disciples that they were “the salt of the earth,—the light of the world,” he meant no vain compliment. “If,” said he, “the salt should lose its savour, wherewith shall the world be salted?”—“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven;” as if he had said, “Ye are made partakers of Divine grace for your own salvation and that of the world;—ye have received light from above, that ye may walk in it yourselves, and diffuse it abroad among your fellow-men.” But if the savour of that grace with which you are seasoned be not made to tell upon the world; if the light shed upon you be not reflected abroad, how shall the world be benefited by your example; how shall it be preserved from destruction by your instrumentality? “You see, brethren, what a high character you have to sustain: you see what great things are expected of you. It is not simply by profession,—not by saying “Lord, Lord;” neither is it by specific acts of duty only that this expectation is fulfilled: the whole of your moral influence must be made to

bear, and that constantly, upon the improvement of the world. You must be habitually impressed with the responsibility of the position in which your Lord has placed you, and hold all that you have received of him as talents to be laid out for his service and glory. And what are these talents?—They are not simply what you possess of this world's good; nor intellectual, nor political weight; but they are also all the virtues that can adorn humanity, all the graces that compose the Christian. You have to embody in conversation and conduct, before an observing world, the pure, the self-denying, the humble, the benevolent principles of your profession. You are to walk as Christ also walked, so that men may take knowledge of you that you have been with Him, and feel themselves drawn to admire and study his holy religion; and, finally, to embrace him as their own and their only Saviour. To promote this great object, the members of a christian church owe to the world,

2. *The encouragement of individuals, by personal application, to receive and profess the gospel.* The invitation of Moses to Ho-

bab,—“Come thou with us, and we will do thee good,” is language which well becomes the mouth of every pious and consistent Christian to any unconverted person with whom he may come in contact. To warn men of their spiritual danger, to beseech them to care for their immortal souls, to speak a word on salvation by Christ crucified, is not exclusively the duty of the minister; it belongs to all who know God, to make him known to others. This, however, it is to be feared, is not sufficiently owned and acted upon;—the labours of trying to convince and convert sinners, is too much left to the unaided exertions of the minister; and, for so leaving it, excuses of every variety are made. One modestly excuses himself on the score of inability; and would say, as Moses, “Who am I that I should go? What shall I say unto them? I am not eloquent, but am slow of speech and of a slow tongue.” Another, from distrust of success, and afraid of contradiction, says with the same Moses, “Behold they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, the Lord hath not

appeared unto thee." My fellow-christians, these excuses are not good;—remember you are not born into the spiritual, any more than into the natural world, for yourself alone: God's people are all, in various spheres and degrees, working people: he says to each one, as he calls him, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." How then can you refuse your personal labour, as far as it can be given? Is it not natural for a servant that loves his master to say, "Lord, what wouldest thou have *me* to do?" Tell me not that you are but a learner yet yourself, and therefore unfit to teach another: we are all scholars in the school of Christ, and you can at least go out and bring a fresh scholar with you into school. Say not you are obscure and unknown, and have no influence in society: this is more than you ought to assert; the meanest man among us has his influence, and if not employed to a good, it will operate to a bad effect. It is not for us to prescribe the limits of our own influence, but just as far as our sphere extends to see that we fill it with service to Christ. You know that in an army

some are officers, others are privates; but all are the king's fighting men. You are the soldiers of Christ, engaged by him in the great cause of heaven against hell,—of human salvation against the enemy of God and man. Through your instrumentality he destroys the works of the devil; and though you may not be called on to storm a strong-hold, or to stand the brunt of a fierce attack, yet, be assured, his wisdom has placed you at your proper post; study its duties—seek the needful qualification—and you will find that you have work to do for him who has called you: it may be of the simplest kind; but if it be of his appointment, he will accept it. If love to him and his service prompt you to what you say, or what you do, he who rewards a cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, will not forget your smallest work of faith—your lightest labour of love: and be assured, that every right-minded pastor will rejoice to see the members of his church actively employed in their respective departments, as his fellow Helpers to the truth. So far from forbidding your ser-

years, he will hail them as the best token of God's blessing on his own ministry; and will be ready to say, "Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them." Finally, the members of a christian church owe to the world around them,

3. *A cheerful assistance to every institution of a benevolent and religious character.* The evangelization of the world, for which the church is intended, requires aggressive, as well as attractive, measures. For the former of these, various defined and specific combinations among Christians are needful: of these happily there are many in the present day. The churches seem to have heard the call by the mouth of the prophet, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city." The slumbers have been long—much too long; but, blessed be God, they are broken at last. The churches are now awake, and rising to their proper work. Societies and institutions, some upon a grander, and others upon a more limited scale, are now in operation to

make inroads upon the kingdom of Satan, and to plant the standard of the cross in every corner of the earth. These are founded, as they ought to be, on the principle of voluntary contribution. Christians must come forward to their aid; they are sustained by the exertions, the prayers, the pecuniary supplies of individual Christians,—and, according as these are forthcoming, the institutions gather strength, messengers and agents are sent out to the high-ways and hedges of our own land, and heralds of salvation are shipped from our shores, to summon the heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth to become the inheritance and the possession of the King of Zion. Such are the doings of your institutions; success sufficient to encourage them has followed their efforts; but as the subjugation of the world to Christ is the object, we need not tell you that comparatively little is yet effected. Many nations remain to be conquered; many countries yet to be won; many fierce rebels yet to be reduced to the obedience of the faith: nevertheless, as the land of Canaan was to the Jews, so is the world promised to the Chris-

tians. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." How ought we to receive this promise, but as at once a command and an encouragement? It conveys a command to the church to send out the gospel to the distant parts of the world, and holds out an encouragement to effort, by guaranteeing ultimate success. Come, then, to the assistance of the institutions organized for that object: let them not languish for lack of your support; refresh and stimulate them by all the countenance you can afford, and bid them go up, in the name of the Lord, and possess the land.

But, my brethren, in drawing to a conclusion, I cannot conceal from myself, that you are not *all* members of a christian church;—and why are you not? Are you lovers of Christ and bearers of his name, and yet estrange yourselves from the house and the privileges he has ordained? Have ye "no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem?" These questions I press upon you; I beg you to answer them to your own con-

sciences. They are of a serious nature ; they are closely connected with your well-being, for time and for eternity. Blink them not ; consider them with grave attention, and lose not sight of them till you come to a conclusion in which you can safely rest. If, indeed, you are conscious that you have no portion in Israel, that you are still of the world, and therefore not warranted to enrol yourself with the people of God, then what warrant have you to hope for heaven ? If you are not in a condition to join the church militant, you are not fit to mingle with the church triumphant. But you cannot take up this position with safety : it is not tenable for a moment, without rendering it still more dangerous by closing your eyes upon it,—by refusing to think of it ! Oh deal not thus untowardly by yourselves ! Remember the current of time is hurrying you along ;—and what is it carrying with it while you remain thus ?—a criminal to the bar of his Judge ! Time is precious,—incalculably precious. “ Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” Come to the cross of Christ ;

look to the sacrifice there offered for sins ;—believe and be saved. Then, feeling your immense obligations to the Redeemer, you will account his yoke easy and his burden light. Becoming his, you will honour every expression of his will by cheerful compliance ; you will make common cause with his people ; you will partake of their privileges, their labours, and their hopes. God grant you this happy issue,—and to him be glory both now and for ever. Amen !

## LECTURE VI.

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### THE DUTIES OF THE HEARERS OF THE WORD.

"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."—James i. 21, 22.

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WHAT word is that which we are required to receive? It may be quite right to put this question at the outset of a discourse intended for the hearers of the word; and we will endeavour to answer it. The term "word" is used under various meanings in the sacred scriptures. It is used in a peculiar sense to signify the second person of the adorable Trinity, the Son of God, who is also our Lord Jesus Christ. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;—and the Word was made

flesh, and dwelt among us." The term is employed also to signify a particular prophecy, or command, or promise, by which the mind or will of God was made known on special occasions. But the term, as it occurs in our text, and in numerous other passages, is intended to mean what is also styled "the truth," the "way of salvation," the "grace of God," the "everlasting gospel," or, "the gospel," as preached according to the will of God. It is the revelation of that truth, which, ere the foundations of the earth were laid, was hid in the bosom of the Eternal alone.—It is the message of a merciful God to an alienated world, revealing to it a pathway prepared by himself for its return to him. It is the unfolding of God's gracious plan of human redemption,—the glad tidings to sinful and wretched men, that he is waiting in Christ Jesus, his Son, to pardon, to purify and receive them to his favour and to life everlasting. This is the word which the apostle exhorts us to receive and obey;—the only word which claims the high character he gives it,—“able to save our souls.” In vain had erring man,

in the politest style in which he ever figured, attempted to find out the true character of God, and the way of acceptance with him; “the world by its wisdom knew not God.” The sagest philosophers, the keenest disputers had brought out their systems in succession, and one learned school had contended with another for an empty fame; and “behold the labour that they had laboured to do was all vanity and vexation of spirit.” The way of truth remained still unknown. Philosophy had spent its strength and done its utmost. Its light was still darkness, and the influence it exerted was either to make men atheists and sceptics, or to confirm them in idolatry and superstition. Such, and so unsatisfactory, must the result of mere human reason have always proved. “Darkness would still have covered the earth, and gross darkness the people,” had not God, in his infinite mercy, granted us a revelation from himself,—destined for, and fitted to, the whole family of man. Of his own sovereign will, and without the interference of any created intelligence, he had determined the plan of human redemp-

tion. But an integral part of that plan was the impartation to the mind of man of the knowledge of God and of the grace intended him, and to his heart of faith in his word;—therefore He, and He only, could reveal it; for “the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” It pleased God that this plan should be made known in successive communications to a people selected from the nations of the earth to be the depositaries of the sacred treasure. These communications, as they followed one after another, gave clearer and clearer announcements of the counsels of heaven, till, in the fulness of time, “he of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus the Son of God, appeared and revealed them to the world. In the wonderful events of his life, and the unparalleled wisdom of his teaching, he proved himself “the way, the truth, and the life,” to guilty men. And then, having completed the great object of his mission to our earth, he commissioned his disciples to go out, and make known to every creature the things concerning himself which they had seen and

heard ; and “this is the ‘word,’ which by the gospel is preached unto you.” Yes, in our Bible—in this one volume whence we address you, from Sabbath to Sabbath, is contained all that the Almighty has condescended to commit to patriarchs, prophets, and to kings, to evangelists and to apostles, for the spiritual instruction of mankind to the end of time. This precious treasure we possess in its fulness, in its purity, and in a language which we all understand.

Brethren, the enjoyment of such a treasure can never be sufficiently prized. In this respect we are privileged much beyond the early ages of the world. “Many prophets and kings desired to see the things which we see, and did not see them ; and to hear the things which we hear, and did not hear them.” They possessed only partial disclosures of that glorious system of truth to the light and gladness of which we are so fully admitted. In these latter times, and in this our favoured country, we possess the aggregate and sum of the various messages and successive revelations of grace and mercy which heaven has

made to the children of men. In our land is heard the joyful sound, proclaiming "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will toward men." Truly, it is to us the most important of all sounds, and ought to be accounted the most gladdening, which announces the harmony of those two great objects, the Divine glory and human happiness; and the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that alone, not only harmonizes, but identifies the one with the other. The recovery of a lost world is the glory of God; therefore the successful working of the gospel in the salvation of sinners glorifies him. The gospel glorifies God, by presenting him to us in his attributes of truth and righteousness, of mercy and love, and these all mutually agreed in one grand purpose. This view of the Deity is peculiar to the gospel. The great God is glorified in his Son, who is represented in this system as assuming our nature, fulfilling the righteous law of God, and dying an ignominious death, that he might save believing sinners, atone for their guilt, and thus accomplish a glorious reconciliation. And this beautiful

scheme of human redemption, by which God is honoured and we are saved,—this revelation of truth, so perfectly adapted to our nature and circumstances,—this Christianity, which casts such a cheerful light on our entire condition, which inspires the mind with the sublimest conceptions, which elevates the character on the highest and holiest principles, and stimulates the soul to heavenly pursuits with a hope full of immortality,—this Christianity is ours! We have it in all its interesting details. We read it in our families, in our closets, in our sanctuaries. We have it preached to us in its purity, with faithfulness, and with all those varied powers of illustration and argument, with which it has pleased the Holy Spirit to endow the ministers of his word. What a debt of gratitude and praise do we owe to our God for such a privilege! We may well take up the congratulations of Moses to the people of Israel, and say of Britain and her people, “What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for,—that hath statutes and

judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"

But if our privileges are great, our responsibilities are also great. Professing, as we do, to believe that the word preached is the word of eternal life, we are under the most solemn obligations to give it our most reverent attention. If the gospel be a system of doctrines the most gracious, of precepts the most wise, of warnings the most merciful, of invitations and promises the freest, the richest, and the most precious, O how thankful ought we to be for such a boon,—how dear should it be to our hearts,—how influential on our characters and lives! But such is the gospel of Christ. It not only supersedes all human devices, all superstition and false philosophy, by its pre-eminent excellence, but it supplies their place with the only and infallible light to guide man to immortality and glory. There is no other name given under heaven by which we can be saved, but the name of Christ; and in the gospel he is offered to us;—therefore, to receive Christ, we must receive the gospel. It is not a matter of op-

tion ; a necessity is laid upon us. It is—receive, and live ; reject, and perish ! Can we, then, with the free use of our rational faculties, and a due regard to our own interests, refuse to hear ? Surely not. Alas ! it is a fatal infatuation, of which many are possessed, who turn away from the voice of heavenly wisdom, and give their ear and attention to the syren-song of this world's entertainments ;—who, scorning the courts of the Lord's house, and the place where his honour dwelleth, sit in the assemblies of the thoughtless and the gay, “the lovers of pleasure more than the lovers of God.” I would ask, shall they prosper, or rather, shall they escape judgment, who do such things ? But *you* are not of that class, my brethren. You acknowledge the claims to be heard which the gospel has; and you do it the homage of your attendance on its ministrations: but suffer, I pray you, a word of exhortation on the *manner* in which the word is to be heard, that it may accomplish the end desired, and “prosper in the thing whereto it is sent.” On this subject the words of the apostle James supply us

with good matter for our meditation:—“Wherefore,” says he, “lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” The text, you will perceive, suggests three things deserving our particular and separate consideration;

I. THE RIGHT STATE OF MIND PREPARATORY TO HEARING THE WORD.

*“Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness.”*

II. THE DISPOSITION TO BE CULTIVATED WHILE HEARING THE WORD.

*“Receive with meekness the engrafted word.”*

III. THE CLAIMS OF THE WORD TO THE OBEDIENCE OF THEM WHO HEAR IT; “it is able to save your souls,—be ye doers of the word.”

These three topics of discourse seem to me to include considerations of the gravest and most interesting character that can be presented to the human mind. They point to

every thing relative to our moral and spiritual nature ; so that nothing can be well conceived of as profitable to our best interests which is not comprehended in them. It is not in me to do them anything like justice ; but with the blessing of God the few remarks I am about to make will not fail to be useful. I invite your attention, then, to—

1. THE RIGHT STATE OF MIND PREPARATORY TO HEARING THE WORD.

To come to the consideration of any question without that previous adjustment of the mind and temper which is suitable to it, and favourable to a right understanding of it, is, to say the least, an irrational, and, according to the importance of the question, a self-injuring procedure. If the subject be any thing merely intellectual or scientific, or where a train of reasoning is required, we shall not be qualified to judge aright of what is stated, far less to receive instruction, if we bring either an unwilling or a prejudiced mind to the discussion. But if the mind be summoned to the great things of God's law, to be in an unprepared, reluctant, or pre-

judiced state, is to peril our most valuable interests. But what is the character of the human mind? Its state by nature is darkness; and it loves that darkness. It is naturally careless, indolent, and averse to serious thinking. It is infected with passions and prejudices opposed to sacred truth. It is, in the strong language of scripture, a "carnal mind, and enmity against God." The heart is corrupt in its affections and desires; the will is proudly and perversely disobedient, and the whole man is alienated against God and goodness. Now, if this be true of man's internal condition,—and it is, alas, too true of every unconverted soul,—how needful it is that the mind be rightly disciplined, and so be brought up prepared to hear the word with profit! To a proper discipline for such an end is the admonition of our apostle directed. Knowing the many and grievous evils that abound in our fallen nature, and that each avenue, whether of the understanding or the heart, is obstructed by some passion or prejudice, or sinful habit, against the entrance of heavenly truth, he makes an ag-

gression at once on these obstructions, and exhorts us to "lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness."

By this mode of expression the apostle alludes more particularly to sins of the temper and tongue;—the filthiness of opprobrious language, and ebullitions of passion. He cautions us against the indulgence of sinful feelings, when the truth is before us;—intimating that, while the mind is under the influence of malice, of pride, of anger, or of carnal prejudice, its eye is shut against the light of truth; and the way to conviction is barred and blocked up. Now, it is especially desirable that a riddance of all this hostile influence be obtained. Till then the mind is not suitably prepared to come to either reading or hearing the word of God.

There are, unhappily, even among multitudes of regularly church and chapel-going people, numerous hindrances to the profitable hearing and receiving the oracles of divine truth. When going to hear the word, they take it for granted that no one doubts their perfect conviction that it *is* the word of God

in which they are about to attend. They are quite sure that, in common with their fellow-attendants, they are allowed to be believers in the divine authority of the scriptures, and in the claims of such scriptures to their attention : and yet they approach men with really believing hearts. An accurate analysis of these hearts would exhibit strange results : they would be found, in various positions, unfriendly to the influence of the truth. Truly, "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ;—who can know it ?" Many come to the ministration of the word so thoroughly imbued with a preference of opinions which mark their own party, or sect, or which they individually favour, that on every thing else, however true, however useful, the preacher, as it regards them, is heard only by sufferance. Points of faith, statements of duty, definitions of abstract terms, and all the technicalities of theology, must be put forth and treated according to *their* view of them, and the prominence which *they* have assigned them. If this be done they are gratified, but not taught : their

prepossessions are confirmed ; but their consciences are not touched,—their hearts are not affected. If, on the other hand, their favourite views receive not the prominence they claim for them, then they are offended, and their hearing is not for the better, but for the worse. These are self-sufficient and contentious hearers, who come in a frame of mind more prepared for controversy than conviction ; and for proudly trying, by their own rule, the preacher's orthodoxy, than for devoutly hearing what God the Lord will say by his mouth. Their's is a state of mind compressed and narrowed within their own pre-adopted systems ; and whatever is not in accordance therewith, is met with indifference or contradiction. But is this, my brethren, a state of mind to bring to the worship of God ? or is it here we find the grace of humility with which the “ whole counsel of God ” ought to be received ? Surely, if we would obey the apostle's admonition, and seek the advancement of our own spiritual interests, we shall pray against all such partial and contentious feelings of mind, whenever the divine oracles are about to be heard.

Again, to give profitable audience to the word of God, we must lay apart, and guard against, all secular and worldly pre-occupations of mind. These are numerous and varied, according to the pursuits of men ; and so entirely do multitudes suffer their minds to be engrossed therewith, that rarely indeed are they prepared to receive a message from God on things of the Spirit and the world to come. The present busy, bustling world is their congenial element ; to break out of it requires an effort which is not easy, and which they are unwilling to make. Hence it is, that in the house of God, which they mechanically frequent, they are not at leisure—not at ease, to welcome an interview with their Maker, to receive his behests, or to drink in the word of his grace. They are otherwise engaged ;—they come to the courts of the Lord with minds filled with the coarse images of this world's trade and occupation. They appear before God in an unholy array : though standing on holy ground they hear not the voice, “ Put off thy shoes from off thy feet.” Their passions, their thoughts are all upon their

every-day concerns. They sit them down in the sanctuary, apparently composed and prepared for the administration of the word, while the heart of one is on his farm, of another on his merchandise, of a third on amusements and entertainments just past, or about to be engaged. None has bethought himself, as it became him, of the humble, devout, and reverential frame of mind required of him to hold converse with his God. Men of this description treat the Almighty with less respect than they would pay, in similar circumstances, to their earthly prince. Had they an invitation to a conference with a monarch of mortal birth, how readily would they disencumber themselves of all other engagements to be in due order and respectful preparation for the honoured interview; but on the days and in the courts, when and where He that reigns in heaven by his name, "King of kings, and Lord of lords," invites them to hold communion with him, the preparation becoming so august, so solemn a meeting occurs not to their minds: thinking only of their fellow-men with whom they are about to assemble,

they deck themelves, it may be, in their best attire, and adjust their exterior to what they consider the taste and decencies of good society require of them: but to discipline the spirit to serious meditation; to prostrate the soul in due humility before God; to pour out the desires of a devout heart for his gracious, life-giving presence,—of exercises such as these they think not. Fearful forgetfulness! awful infatuation! Perilous in the extreme is their condition, though they seem to know it not. They may have read, or heard, but care not for the charge which the Lord bade Moses deliver to Aaron, saying,—“ This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me; and before all the people I will be glorified.”

Brethren, search and see if evils of this nature attach to you: let conscience do its work upon you; and to whatever degree you feel yourselves chargeable with these things, take the apostle’s counsel, “ lay them apart;” and when you address yourselves to the hearing of the word of God, examine the state of your minds and hearts; and if you are conscious either of a slumberous indifference about the all-impor-

tant things of divine revelation, or of a haughty disrelish of the meek and lowly spirit of the gospel, seek with all importunity the power of the Holy Spirit to rouse and awaken you out of the snare of the evil one, and to "cast down imaginations, and every thing that exalteth itself within you against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity your every thought to the obedience of Christ."

But if we strive in right earnest to "lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness;" if we truly seek to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us;" we shall not stop at that which is only negative, we shall cultivate a positive preparation for rightly hearing the word. In repressing the feelings of unbelief or levity, to which the human mind is so prone, we shall also seek to cherish a high veneration for the divine authority of the word we are about to hear; we shall come to it with an awe upon our spirits, favourable to a submissive reception of it in its power and influence. In labouring to hush the turbulence of carnal and worldly passions, we shall seek to have our minds com-

posed to a due sense of the majesty of Him with whom we have to do. Humility is an essential element in this preparation. If we would make attainments in divine knowledge, and grow in the spiritual life, we must come to the administration of the word with docile and child-like dispositions of mind. "Verily I say unto you," is the announcement of the Saviour himself, "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein." Let us then, my brethren, strive to come into his courts with an acceptable offering; let us charge our souls humbly and prayerfully to wait before God, that an unction of his Spirit may descend upon us to prepare us for the sacred engagements; let us earnestly implore his aid to create within us a suitable disposition for receiving the communications of his will, whether it be "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, or for instruction in righteousness." This brings us to the next thing suggested by the words of the text,—

**II. THE DISPOSITION TO BE CULTIVATED  
WHILE HEARING THE WORD.**

If we are asked, wherein does this disposition consist ? we would say in general, in the state of mind and heart which you may have prayed to God, before coming into his sanctuary, he would help you to cherish. If then, your closet exercises breathed a right spirit, and the one great desire of your soul was that the word heard might profit you, doubtless these three things were included ; that you might treat the word, 1, with a close and reverential attention ; 2, with a candid and teachable reception ; and, 3, with a firm and implicit faith. These are the elements of a suitable frame and temper of mind for listening to the word ; and they are all involved in the apostolic injunction of our text. We are, then, to treat the word,

1. *With a close and reverential attention.* Our Lord, you are aware, concludes his instructive parable of the sower and seed, with these impressive words, “ Who hath ears to hear, let him hear !” meaning that the lessons which he was delivering were of the very highest importance ; that the attention of men could be called to nothing of so much vital

consequence to them ; that the ears were never turned to any sounds deserving their attention till they caught those of his heavenly instruction : that, in time, the very sense of hearing is, strictly speaking, never profitably employed till it listens to the words of eternal life. The claim which is thus set up to the attention of every mortal ear, is founded on the supreme authority of Him who addresses it, and the supreme importance of that which is addressed to it. The authority is divine : the word we speak of is the word of the living and true God :—it is, therefore, the word of truth : for he is emphatically the God of truth.—the very fountain of truth. “God is light : and in him is no darkness at all.” It follows, that whatever communication it may please him to make to his creatures has the stamp of the highest possible authority. Let this consideration weigh upon our minds ; let us remember that the word spoken to us in the sanctuary, is the word of Him whose throne is in the heaven, and who dwelleth in light unapproachable : and we cannot, surely, fail to listen with profound reverence and

godly fear. Let us think of the weak, helpless creature, whose foundation is in the dust, admitted to audience with the glorious Creator;—of sinful dust and ashes in converse with the high, the holy, and the jealous God;—and say, with what subduing awe, with what breathless attention, the heavenly oracles should be received! O, brethren, a contrast like this cannot be put in a light sufficiently strong by the language of any created being! Who can measure the distance between the throne of the Eternal, and the dust of his footstool? Who can describe the condescension of the Majesty of heaven in communion with a fallen creature? The blessed intelligences above, who are round about his throne, fall upon their faces and cast their crowns before it, when they worship Him that sitteth thereon, or receive his behests, to do his pleasure; how much more should sinful mortals bow with contrition and self-abasement before him, and listen to the voice of his mouth! “Wherewith should we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the high God,” if not with deepest humility and

the most reverential attention to his every word? But if, before coming to the house of God, we have disciplined our minds aright, we shall be disposed to receive his word,

2. With *a candid and teachable spirit*. If we duly consider the native darkness and ignorance of our minds, and the unmeasurable condescension of Jehovah in granting his presence to our imperfect worship, and revealing to us the counsels of his will, we shall feel that it is for us only to surrender ourselves implicitly to his instructions, that we may become wise. We draw near professedly to learn the great things of his law; his Spirit alone is adequate to teach them: let us receive them with all honesty and docility of mind. It is in his word he reveals himself; he teaches us there of his nature and attributes; his character, his doings, his requirements. How can we know aught of these but from himself? He only can enlighten the eyes of our understanding to know them. Let us then, cast away the prepossessions of pride, and the trammels of party; and with free, disengaged, unbiassed minds, yet thirsting for

knowledge imbibe the full stream, as it descends to us from the fountain head. Let us yield ourselves, with all meekness and submission, to the genuine influence of heavenly truth; let us cherish in our hearts an ardent longing for the word, as for our daily food: "as new-born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby."

But alas! our hearts are naturally gross, and our ears are dull of hearing! Our intercourse with the world, and the mastership which its interests seem to exert over our passions, our tempers, our pursuits, tend not only to distract our attention from a profitable hearing of the word, but to render the conscience and the heart callous and unimpassible under it. So far as the world is allowed to operate, it will ever be found inimical to serious thought. To the mind of a worldling, unattuned as it is to the pure pleasures of communion with God, the approach of the Holy Spirit in his word, is unwelcome. His words fall upon the ear, and scarcely reaching the understanding, fail entirely of the heart. He occupies his place regularly, it may be, in

a worshipping assembly; and with all decorum and apparent attention, seems to hear; but his thoughts are fixed only on his secular engagements; and his every-day conversation, schemes, and purposes, engross his soul. Such is the internal exhibition he makes to the searching eye of God. Of hearers like him it is that the Lord makes this cutting complaint to his prophet: "They come unto thee as the people cometh; and they sit before thee as my people; and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness."

Brethren, the worldly and covetous spirit does not, cannot, receive the things of God. It has nothing in common with them, and is insensible of their value. Against such a spirit it is for the life and health of our souls to guard and to strive. We are all, more or less, exposed to its intrusions; for it has innumerable ways of insinuating itself into the unguarded heart. To be delivered from this, and every other thraldom, so that we may receive the word "with meekness," the ener-

getic aid of the Holy Spirit must be earnestly invoked, and constantly relied on. By his aid only can we overcome the world and our own evil propensities. If we would be successful and happy recipients of the grace of God, it is under the guidance of the Spirit we must come to the hearing of his word, and under his purifying and enlightening influences must we listen to it. His office it is to open the heart, as he did in the case of Lydia of Thyatira, that we may attend to, and receive, the things that are spoken. He ploughs up and prepares the soil for the good seed of the kingdom; and however much it may cost our corrupt natures to endure it, let it be our ardent desire and prayer that he would work that culture upon our hearts and consciences, that we may be prepared for every gracious impression. Then will the ministrations of the sanctuary nourish and delight our souls. The warmth and light of Divine truth will exhale and dissipate every gross vapour from our minds, and shine in upon us with an attractive and commanding evidence. Then will "the doctrine of God our Saviour" tell

upon our inner powers and faculties with quickening, yet sweet, efficiency, "dropping as the rain, and distilling as the dew upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." But we observe also that a due preparation for hearing the word of God will dispose us to receive it,

3. *With a firm and implicit faith.* It is evident that a candid and respectful attention may be given to the delivery of the word, and no ultimate benefit be derived, unless it be received with a believing heart. "The word preached," says the apostle, speaking of the unbelieving Jews, "did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Faith, therefore, is indispensable; but not more so than it is reasonable. Once convinced that what we are hearing is the word of God, we are morally bound to believe it. The truth, or veracity, of God is admitted; it follows that whatever emanates from him is invariably true; and the words of God, who "altereth not the thing that is gone out of his lips," demand our ready confidence, our implicit faith. The being self-evident, the

unbelieving hearer of God's word is self-condemned; and man, the rational, the accountable creature of God, cannot be placed in a more fearful state than this. The apostle John describes it thus: "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." An alarming and impressive description this of the sin of unbelief. It is, however, a faithful and fair description. For when we dispute the testimony of a fellow-man, we give him the lie, offering him what, in the general estimation, is held the very last insult. Estimate then, if you can, the guilt of discrediting the words of the immutable God, the fountain of truth! The miserable being who has contracted this guilt is at awful enmity with God, seeing that "without faith it is impossible to please him." The Divine Being can have no complacency in a soul that confides not in his word; and there is nothing for it, if proud unbelief be obstinately maintained, but to fling the insulting creature away from him, "to treasure up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of

righteous judgment." If these things are so, who that knows the deceitfulness of the human heart, does not see how needful is the Saviour's counsel, "Take heed *how* ye hear." Yes, much as all and each of us may have read or heard of the word of God, this counsel needs to be again and again reiterated,— "Take heed *how* ye hear!" for the word of God, or the sacred scriptures, reveal to us "all things that pertain to life and godliness." The Author of our being has condescended to teach us in his word all that we need to know and to do, to be accepted of him. It is our part, then, to receive his revelations just as they are. They contain facts of a humbling character concerning ourselves, testifying against us that we have revolted from the Lord our Maker; that we have broken his holy law, and made ourselves obnoxious to his righteous indignation; and this we are bound to believe with a humble and penitent heart. But they reveal also the astonishing mercy and grace of God, in devising and fulfilling an infallible scheme of reconciliation;—and this is worthy of our most grateful and cordial acceptance.

They unfold to us the way, the only way, whereby this reconciliation is effected; and urged and entreated as we are in the gospel preached to us, to take that only way, O how gladly, how eagerly ought we to avail ourselves of the invitation, and escape, by the appointed way, from the wrath to come, our hearts responding to the call of the Saviour, “Lord! to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”

It thus appears that every consideration that can weigh upon a rational mind unites to press the attentive and believing reception of the word of God. Fellow sinners! remember that on this your all is suspended; for the life that now is, your character, your usefulness, your peace and comfort;—at death, your only hope, your highest consolation;—and for the life that is to come, your entrance into the kingdom of your Lord and Saviour, and your reign with him in glory: these, all these, are forfeited and lost, if the offered boon be despised and neglected through unbelief. Hear, and tremble at, the awful denunciations which the word we speak of has passed upon conduct

so wicked and ungrateful. “ Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me !” Do not then, we beseech you, trifle with this great concern. The case is simply this ;—your salvation is now offered to you ; receive, and live :—refuse, and perish. The means of grace are granted, and now is the time for diligently using and improving them. The voice of heavenly wisdom is still “ crying at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men, I call ; and my voice is to the sons of man. Incline your ear, and come unto me ; hear, and your soul shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” Happy they who

meekly, thankfully, believably, embrace these gracious invitations ; who, discarding their unbelief, their self-sufficiency, and every besetting prejudice, trust their souls, with all their interests, to One who has proved himself mighty to save by dying for them and rising again, and who ever liveth, their intercessor and advocate, before the throne of God. We come now to consider,

### III. THE CLAIMS OF THE WORD TO THE OBEDIENCE OF THEM WHO HEAR IT.

Our text tells us that "the engrafted word is able to save our souls," and adds, "be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." We have hitherto been asserting for the word of God a right to be attentively, candidly, and believably, heard ; it remains that we maintain its claims to universal obedience. The advocate and friend of religion has gone but a little way when he has persuaded men to a regular, and well-conducted, attendance on the ministration of the word ; nor has he reached his end and object, when he has gained their assent to its various statements. He cannot be satisfied

till he has seen the will also subject to the power of the truth, and its practical excellency adorning the conversation and conduct. You will remember that our Lord, after a course of instructions to his disciples, concludes by reminding them that he aimed at something more than simply informing their judgment. "If ye *know* these things," said he, "happy are ye if ye *do* them." These words, so plainly and so emphatically expressed by himself, sufficiently prove that Christianity is a *practical* system. Though we must never forget that the method of salvation which it reveals is entirely of grace—a method originating in infinite love, and accomplished wholly by Divine agency, to the utter exclusion of human merit, we must also remember, that it does enjoin unreserved obedience to the Divine will, while it furnishes motives of the strongest efficiency to dispose us to yield the obedience required. Christ came not merely to deliver men from the infliction of punishment for sin, but to reclaim them from the dominion of sin itself; to rescue them from the enslaving power of the enemy of God and man,

and to bring them back to a recognition of God's rightful supremacy ; that they might render to him the homage to which He only is entitled. " Christ," says the apostle John, " was manifested to take away our sins ; and whosoever abideth in him sinneth not." Our religion is a holy religion. All its institutes originate in the love of holiness, and are intended to produce holiness in them that receive them. It teaches the way of salvation by the grace of faith in Christ Jesus ; and the way of holiness, as the result of that grace. It is, therefore, a perfect system, teaching and inculcating all the duties of the present life, and securing the interests of the life to come. We can boldly assert of it what can be declared of no other system under heaven, that it provides unerringly for the entire happiness of man. It warns him of his dangers in all their forms and degrees, and points to the way of escape. It cautions him against false confidence, and shows him where his only safety lies. It instructs him in all that he has to fear, and conducts him to a hope that cannot fail. It trains him, under the blessing of God, to holi-

ness in the present life, and prepares him for happiness and glory in the life to come. Knowing such to be the character of the word of God, or the holy scriptures, the apostle Paul declares that they are “able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” The apostle James, in our text, says the same thing; “the engrafted word is able to save our souls.” How just, then, how strong are its claims to obedience! Its authority claims it—it is the word of God; its importance claims it—it is for our life.

But its claims extend over the whole of our moral nature. We shall therefore not honour them with the homage they demand, if we limit them to the mere *external and visible doings* of our lives; we owe them also the subjection of *the thoughts of our hearts*, and the *words of our mouth*.

1. We shall not, I think, be required to argue the truth, that the word of God has much to do with the heart. It is, indeed, to the heart it chiefly legislates. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,

with all thy mind, and with all thy soul," is pronounced by our Lord himself to be the first and great commandment; and it is evident, from the whole tenor of scripture, that the word of God is not obeyed, unless from the heart. No word or deed which the heart has not prompted has ever been owned of God as acceptable service. This is clearly taught us in the complaint of the Lord against the hypocrisy of the Jews. "This people draw near to me with their mouth, and with their lips do they honour me, but have removed their hearts far from me." Besides, the alienation of man from God begins at the heart. There misrule and disorder reign; and there is the seat of enmity against God. It is accordingly to the heart the Holy Spirit directs his summons for the surrender of the whole man, in the conversion of a sinner. The sword which he wields in the taking of this strong-hold is the word of God; "for the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a dis-

cerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." For the vindication, however, of the spiritual character of the Divine word, and its right to rule the thoughts and motives of the heart, we have but to look at the exposition of it given by Christ himself, as he sat on the mount and taught the multitudes around him. The chief interest of that truly edifying discourse lies in the utter annihilation it makes of all hope in mere external conformity to the law of God, and in establishing its unequivocal demand of the whole heart. And how could it demand less? The wisdom of God, as well as his grace, in asking the heart of man, commends itself to our judgment; for it is the heart that gives character and value to words and deeds. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

But all this may appear common-place, and as wanting point; because it has often been insisted on before. You may even allege, that, as you do not deny the claims of God's word to the obedience of the heart, it is superfluous to multiply words on the subject. But we are well aware that the judgment

often assents to claims, while the heart refuses to bow to them, or do them homage. The affections go not with the assent. Credit is often given to facts in which we take no pleasure. We do, for instance, believe, on credible testimony, in the sickness or death of a friend at a distance, in the loss of property, or in the failure of some mercantile speculation ; all of which we regret, and should be happy, if they were not true. Such is the faith which the word of God often meets with from men. Its evidence is too strong for contradiction, its truth is admitted, but not delighted in ;—the homage of the heart is therefore refused. This being the case, we must not, we dare not, cease to reiterate, on behalf of God's word, that it is not honoured, unless it be enthroned in the heart—unless it be received with a faith of complacency. We must be urgent here; for there is a strong reluctance in our nature to render to God the things which we acknowledge to be his. God, in his word and providence, comes after each one of us, and cries, “My son, give me thy heart.” Our judgments reply, “it is a reasonable de-

mand ;" but let our compliance be tested, and we shall too often find the traitorous heart, with all its passions and prejudices, in obstinate resistance to Divine control, and fearfully struggling for independence. A truth, then, so essential to your safety, must not be carelessly taken for granted, or slightly noticed. Its importance is impressively taught us by the Holy Spirit himself in the frequent allusions he makes to it in his own word. We find it significantly recognized in our present text; for you see, it is not simply "the word," either read or heard; but the "*engrafted* word," which is declared to be "able to save our souls." It must be *implanted*—*inrooted*, in our inner man;—it must incorporate with our whole moral nature; and, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, enlighten the understanding, purify the conscience, knit the heart in love to Christ, and conform the will in all things to the will of God. All this the word is intended to effect; and when mixed with faith in them that hear it, all this it does effect. Blessed, then, supremely blessed are they, who, with implicit,

unquestioning faith, receive the word ; who, against all the temptations of the world and Satan, and their own infirmities, steadily retain and abide by the word ; who can truly say before God, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." To this blessedness, my brethren, let us aspire. Let us cultivate that state of the heart and affections which is favourable to communion with God. Our souls will then be sweetly subdued to unison with his own mind. We shall prize his gracious communications as our richest treasure ; and shall feel our attachment powerfully drawn out towards its bountiful Author.

The believer, whose heart is thus gained, through Divine agency, by the instrumentality of the word, comes under a process of sanctification. The enmity of his heart is overcome ; the traitorous possessors are dislodged ; it is now the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. The thoughts that formerly excluded God, and the things pertaining to the spiritual life, now obey the new and holy attraction. They are ever flowing, more or less, in

an upward current to God, the centre of that attraction; and dwell, with peculiar delight, on his character as revealed in his word. When employed on temporal objects and the business of common life, they are regulated by the laws of purity and truth, and the kind benevolent principles of the gospel. The motives, the desires, the taste, are now under holy direction. The Spirit of God corrects whatever he finds amiss in the heart where He resides. He suffers no rancorous passion to riot there. He seizes on every wish, every purpose, at the moment of its birth, and sanctifies it to God and pious ends. The soul is imbued with the love and the fear of God, to whose glory every power and every motion are made to bend. To a believer under this high and holy training I would say, "It is well with thee, who hast received the law from the mouth of God, and laid up his word in thine heart; for thou shalt have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God."

Brethren, let me ask, is this the happy state of heart with each one of you? or, are

there not many among you who indulge the notion that you are not accountable for your thoughts ? You allege, that in the multitude of thoughts that pass through your minds, there are many of an improper character involuntarily admitted, for which you incur no blame ; that, arising, as they often do, from circumstances over which you have no control, you can be no more held responsible for them, than for the circumstances that suggest them ; and that they are at least harmless until the overt act betray them. We grant that evil thoughts, from sources unsought and unexpected, do often glance through the purest minds. But these are not only uninvited ; they are unwelcome, disliked, and presently banished. “ I hate vain thoughts,” says the Psalmist, “ but thy law do I love.” If, on the contrary, idle and sinful thoughts, from whatever quarter, are made welcome,—if they are entertained and cherished in the mind, they will hold the ascendant there ; and on every occasion leave it more depraved and polluted than before. “ Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts ; and these are the

things which defile a man." If you presume that you are at liberty to think as you please; and that, because no one about you can take cognizance of your thoughts, you may therefore let them run out into any folly, any vanity, any sin, without shame and without fear, you set yourselves in direct opposition to the law of God, which tells you, "The thought of foolishness is sin." By giving such license to the motions of your minds you offend Him who "searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts," and whose commandment is, "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy." Alas! the heart, in a natural state, is carnal,—is deceitful,—is wicked! and if you are in any degree awake to this truth, you will not fail to pray, and that with earnestness and importunity, that the Lord would fulfil in your happy experience his gracious promise, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to

walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."

We have insisted, at some length, and with some earnestness, on the obedience of the heart to the mind and will of God as expressed in his word. We have done so, because it is a point of the first importance that the heart be right with God. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life ;—an admonition which points at once to the source of all obedience—the state of the heart. The heart is the fountain of conversation and conduct ; and, as we have observed, that the claims of God's word extend over the whole of our moral nature, we come now to the second, and assert its claims to regulate the *words of our mouth*.

2. If there are many who vainly imagine that their accountability does not extend to the *thoughts* which they indulge, there are multitudes who presume, that they may *speak* as they please. Their words, on many occasions, fly out at random. They take no note of them, as involving any moral responsibility ; and if you check them in their career of thought-

less, insipid speech, they are ready to exclaim, “Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?” David did not so judge in this question. He felt deeply the importance of a well-regulated tongue, and made it the subject of prayer. “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” David was evidently not one of those who held the use of speech to be unrecognizable by the Divine law. It is a fair inference from his prayer that he owned himself accountable to God both for *what* he spoke, and *how* he spoke. But we may learn yet more than this from David’s prayer. It is expressive of deep anxiety that he might not be suffered to offend God by the words of his mouth. It represents him as conscious that there was danger, through his own weakness, of so transgressing; and as very sensible of his dependence on Divine aid for preservation. Under such impressions as these, the prayer he uttered was needful and becoming; and in perfect keeping with this state of mind the same Psalmist prays, on another occasion, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable

in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer." If, then, we partake of David's spirit, we shall think it no light matter how we order our speech before God and the world. Neither is this an easy matter. Our apostle considered the right discipline of the tongue so arduous a task, that he sets it above the ability of any man. "The tongue," says he, "can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." He identifies the attainment of an inoffensive use of that member with a sort of perfection. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body." As if he had said, "Such a man has achieved a grand conquest, and is prepared for every other act of obedience." He then proceeds to show, by appropriate illustrations, the ruinous consequences that must follow from giving to the tongue an unrestrained liberty of utterance; and presses us, from a due regard to our character and the cause of religion, to regulate our speech by the wisdom that cometh from above. Brethren, this demands constant watchfulness. We must watch inwardly and

outwardly, against our own evil propensities, our selfishness, our pride, our envyings, our uncharitableness; and against provocations from without,—the folly, the injustice, the impiety, of men around us. From one or other of such causes we are in continual danger of being provoked to speak unadvisedly with our lips. We live, as it were, in the midst of combustibles;—a spark of fire falling upon them might kindle them into a destructive conflagration. What need of watchfulness and prayer! Of watchfulness, that we may be timely apprised of our danger, and of prayer, that we may obtain aid from above, to escape or to overcome. In neither of these duties must we ever relax. In no season, on no topic, can a Christian dare to be careless in his speech. If *he* watches not, the *enemy* will; and in one or other of the numerous points in which he is vulnerable, he will surely wound him. The tongue is an instrument of frequent use. It is the glory of our bodily frame; and may be made specially serviceable in the cause of God; but if, relaxing our vigilance, we be caught in any

snare of the devil, and give undue license to the tongue, it may prove an engine of awful mischief. Hear the apostle's description of an unbridled tongue: "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth ! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity : so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature ; and it is set on fire of hell !"

But some hearers of the word are apt to think, if not to say, "These remonstrances and these admonitions need not certainly be addressed to us. Let them be rung in the ears of those people, who, reckless of all law and order, offend both God and man by the profanity and rudeness of their habitual language. But we do acknowledge the claims of God's word to the obedience of our lips; we have learnt to respect the third commandment, and take not the name of God in vain; neither do we defile our tongues with the unchristian and wicked practice of cursing our fellow-men. It may be so, my brethren, we must not suppose a professed Christian can be a blasphemer or a railer. But this is merely

negative, and but a small portion too of the negative part of the christian character. The offences of the tongue are, in kind and degree, innumerable. It is not only the impious, the profane, the reviling tongue, which the Christian must abhor ; there are vices of the impure, the foolish, the idle-talking tongue, which he must avoid. The hearer of the word, who indulges in these sins is not a *doer* of the word, for it expressly forbids them, “ Fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints ; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.” Then, there are those of the deceitful, the angry, the back-biting tongue, which the hearer of the word knows are equally forbidden. “ Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile ;” “ Lying lips are abomination to the Lord ;” “ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”

Let these suffice, as specimens of the numerous sins of the tongue. They are each

and all directly opposed to the Divine law; and it will not be denied that the avoidance of them is essential to the christian character. But it is evident, from the phraseology of the apostle,—“Be ye *doers* of the word,” that not a negative only, but a positive conformity to the word, is required. It is not enough that, like Job, you say, “My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit;” you must also be “holy in all manner of conversation.” It is not enough that “no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth;” you are expected to speak that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. There is a fact, my brethren, which, once admitted, lays an unquestionable ground for all claims on your service as Christians to your Divine Master, and that is, “**YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN.**” God has a purchase-right in you, that you should glorify him in your body, as well as in your spirit, which are his. Every faculty, every member of your frame, belongs to him; and that ennobling, that distinguishing gift—the faculty of speech—ought especially to be

employed in his service and to his glory. Speech is the expression of thought; and let the thoughts of the heart be habitually employed about God, dwelling with seriousness and deep interest on his nature, his character and his doings; and the tongue, the organ of speech will not fail to speak of him. “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.” David, whose heart was much with God, calls his tongue his glory, and charges it to speak his praise: “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my *glory*; awake, psaltery and harp;” “Thou hast put off my sack-cloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my *glory* may sing praise to thee, and not be silent.” This service is due from all God’s people. “Thy saints,” says the Psalmist, “shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power.” And can the Christian find any subject so abundant in matter, so full of interest in its character, as that which concerns the glory of his Divine Redeemer? In promoting his glory, the Christian knows that

he is securing also the highest interests of mankind.

Again, as it regards your religious intercourse with your fellow-christians, the apostle enjoins you to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." And in your conversation with the world, if you would fully sustain your high calling of God, you must see that "your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

In a word, let us copy from the divine pattern that Christ has left us. In this, as in other parts of our religious character, we are to learn of him. He spoke, indeed, as never man spoke, and as never man can speak ; but there are many approaches to his perfect example, at which we are called to aim ; and much (oh! how much!) in this way yet remains for the best of us to reach. "In his mouth there was found no guile ; when he was reviled, he reviled not again ; when he suffered,

he threatened not. "Grace was poured into his lips;" and "all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." Brethren, let the example of Christ stimulate you; let love to him constrain you to employ your tongues in his service; speak well of his name on all occasions; recommend the perusal and study of his gospel, if possible, to all with whom you come into contact; tell of the light and the guidance, and the consolation, and the joys, you have yourselves derived from it. Believe me, the breath of Christians can never be so well expended as in warning, counselling, instructing, and praying with and for, their fellow-men. The time is promised when "they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know him, from the least unto the greatest." I need not say, this time is not yet arrived. It follows, then, from the very terms of this promise, that every man among you is expected to employ his ability in teaching his brother, or his neighbour, to know the Lord. Till that gracious promise

be fulfilled, no Christian is at liberty to be silent in the cause of his Master. The Christian's resolution, resting on the help of the Spirit, should be that of the prophet; "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace; and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

3. To be "doers of the word," to the full extent of the apostle's meaning, we must be conformed to its requirements also in the visible *doings of our lives*. The apostle speaks of some who had the *form* of godliness, but denied its *power*; intimating that while the reality of godliness consists in its power, it has also its *form* for due exhibition: it is principle in the heart, and practice in the life. The light of truth is *within*, but the command of Christ is, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." It is evident, therefore, that the Christian is not in his duty when affecting concealment. No; "men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel." The followers of Christ are bound

to take their places, under the appointment of Providence, in the active walks of life. Into these they are to carry with them the pure principles of their holy religion; and so contrast them with the loose maxims and selfish policy of the world, that sin may be rebuked and Christ honoured.

From this view of the case you will perceive, brethren, that if you are “the called according to his purpose,” you will not rest satisfied with simply possessing, you will also honestly and openly profess, religion. You will not confine yourselves to merely personal and individual service; but, joining that society of Christians with whom you can most conscientiously act, you will strive to walk together with them “in all the commandments and ordinances of God, blameless.” There is a close, an inseparable connexion, between the principle within and the life without. The principle in your hearts is spoken of as “the power that worketh in you.” Far from being any thing merely theoretic, it is a living and active principle;—it is, in truth, “the word which effectually worketh in you that believe,”

and which will not fail to distinguish you from others. It will dispose you to "adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour, in all things;" it will characterize your disposition and conduct in every social relation you are called to fill. As servants, you will be industrious, punctual, and faithful to our trust;—as children, you will be submissive, dutiful, affectionate to your parents;—as wives, as husbands, kindly and tenderly attached one to another;—as tradesmen, or members of the community in any capacity, upright, charitable, and benevolent. Under the influence of this holy and energetic principle, you will not "sleep as do others;" you will be awake and alive to the circumstances of the world around you; and feeling yourselves placed among a fallen and perishing race, you will not only be anxious to ascertain your own safety, but will exert yourselves to the utmost to save others. The master-passion of your souls will be love to Him "who gave himself for you, that he might redeem you from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

And, as it regards your personal characters, this powerful principle will form you into examples of moderation in all things. If possessed of temporal good, you will "use this world so as not abusing it;"—if poor, "having food and raiment, you will be therewith content;"—if you are prosperous, of what "you have freely received, you will freely give;"—if you are in adversity, you will patiently "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God;"—if exposed to temptation, you will repair "to the throne of grace, and obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;"—if you are persecuted, you will "love even your enemies; you will bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."

How lovely is the life of a Christian, when conducted purely on his own principles, and when he sustains a conversation becoming the gospel! But we mean not to say that absolute perfection is reached on this side heaven. The Christian, while in the body, is still imperfect. The most distinguished of God's

servants have come short, and failed in exhibiting all the fruits of the Spirit. Abraham's faith was more than once shaken by unbelief; Jacob's honesty of heart was marred by dissimulation; Job uttered words of impatience; and Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips. We know that the disciples and apostles themselves betrayed their weakness on several occasions; and Paul honestly admits, "not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect." So true it is, that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." But it becomes us as the followers of the same blessed Leader, to cultivate the spirit of the apostle, that we may say with him, "This one thing we do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Oh, if Christians were more generally actuated with this spirit, how soon would the languor and apathy of which we now complain, cease to dishonour the churches! how deep and over-

flowing would the living stream of piety flow ! how abundant and beautiful would the fruits appear ! and how mightily would the glory of the Redeemer be diffused abroad !

But whence is this deficiency of vital and practical religion ? Why is it that we every day complain that the *hearers* are so vastly more numerous than the *doers* of the word ? Why ? Because we do not, each one for himself, search and scrutinize our spiritual state before God. We are individually prone to self-complacency, and unwilling to disturb it with close self-examination. Instead of seriously, and apart, inquiring, “Wherein am I lacking ?—What talents of my Lord’s am I hiding ?—What work of faith, what labour of love am I neglecting ?—What unchristian feeling am I still indulging ?—What favourite sin do I yet retain ?—What, in fine, is the plague of my own heart ?” Instead of thus inquiring and searching of ourselves, we look at our small attainments in religion through a magnifying medium, and easily flatter ourselves that we have at least reached all the

excellence that, in our circumstances, was attainable; and so “we settle upon our lees.” Whilst this is the state of things with one and another among us, the general character of the religious community must continue to be what it is,—feeble, inefficient, and with but here and there a man of might in the Lord. If, then, we wish the prosperity of Zion; if we would see her “awake, shake herself from the dust, and put on her strength, and her beautiful garments;” if we would promote the honours of her King in the midst of her, let each one of us see that “laying apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, we receive with meekness the engrafted word; and, giving all diligence, ‘add to our faith virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity;’ so that we may be neither idle, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Finally, brethren, think of the concluding words of our text, “Not hearers only, deceiving your own selves:” as if the apostle

had said, “Be not like too many of our countrymen, who think they do enough for religion when they give their regular attendance at the synagogue to hear the law read; for, be assured, that *to satisfy yourselves with simply hearing the word, is self-deception*. The apostle, it may be, alludes to the Jewish formalists of his own day; but he applies the warning to the unprofitable hearers of the gospel. It is, therefore, quite possible to show yourselves regularly in the sanctuary, to give respectful attention to the preaching of the word, and even to do it the homage of your verbal assent; and yet, all your religion may be vain. You may, to use the apostle’s simile, have looked at yourselves in the gospel-mirror; its faithfulness may have reflected your deformities upon you, and shocked your consciences for a time; and you may have felt an uneasy conviction that a change was needful; but alas! you may turn away from this wholesome monitor, and surrender yourselves to the flattering insinuations of Satan, and the snares of an ungodly world. The ministers

of the word cannot, then, in your case, be “the savour of life unto life, but of death unto death.” Awful, but inevitable conclusion!—Yes, *inevitable*; for it is written, “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Consider your case;—you are hearers of the gospel, of the way of salvation by faith in the Son of God;—you are required to believe; “to repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance;” but ye refuse,—ye hear, indeed, but ye will not obey. The ministers of Christ beseech you, in his name, to be “reconciled to God;” to break off from the world, and to “lay hold on eternal life.” You hear the message, but you turn away in unbelief, and send the messengers back with aching hearts to complain, “Who hath believed our report; and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” And is it so? Shall the love of God, in giving his own Son to fulfil all righteousness, and to die for

you ;—shall the grace and compassion of the Lord Jesus, in becoming your surety at such a cost ;—shall salvation from the wrath of God, and glory and immortality, with every needful aid to obtain them, be freely offered to your faith ; and shall all be despised and rejected ? Will “ God, then, be unrighteous, who taketh vengeance ? ” Hear the apostolic answer to this : “ If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a *just* recompence of reward, how shall *we* escape, if we neglect so great salvation ? ” When Moses “ called all Israel, and said unto them,” in the name of the Lord, “ Hear, O Israel ! ” had any bold rebel dared to exclaim, “ I will *not* hear,” think you instant punishment would not have followed his impiety, either directly from heaven, or by the hands of the congregation ? God now speaks to you in the gospel of his Son ; and his voice is not, as at mount Sinai, accompanied with “ thunder, and lightnings, and the noise of a trumpet.” It is the still, small voice of peace and good-will to men ; it is the voice of

kind warning, of gracious invitation, of precious promise. And what is the work which this voice enjoins upon you? "This," said Jesus, "is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Expose not yourselves, therefore, to the sorcer punishment of them "who tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing." That sacred blood secures acceptance with God, and the joys of heaven, to believers who trust in it; while it brings down tenfold perdition on the unbelieving who despise it. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we would persuade you, brethren, "to give the more earnest heed to the things which ye have heard, lest at any time ye should let them slip." We would urge you, again and again, to the obedience of the gospel; we invite you to the service of Christ; we assure you, upon the authority of his own word, that "his yoke is easy, and his burden is light;" we promise you that in the keeping of his commandments there is a present and a great reward,—a peace that passeth all understanding, and a hope that shall not make

ashamed ; your trials and troubles will be sanctified to your good ; your death will be without a sting ; and your eternity, the beatific sight of God, with “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.—Amen.







